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MICHELANGELO  
*Capitol Gallery, Rome.*

# MICHELANGELO

By

GERALD S. DAVIES

WITH 126 PLATES

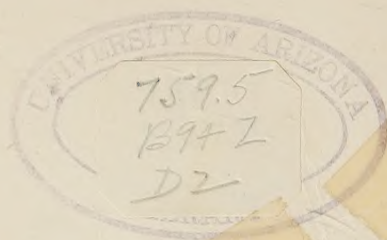
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TO THE MEMORY OF  
**GEORGE FREDERICK WATTS**

AND IN GRATITUDE FOR THE HELP DERIVED FROM HIS WORK  
AND FRIENDSHIP, THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

BY THE AUTHOR





## PREFACE

THE life of a man who began serious work at the age when most men are still children, whose activity was thenceforward continuous for some eighty years till the stroke of death fell upon him, and who was at once Sculptor, Painter, Architect, Engineer, and Poet, cannot be handled with any completeness within the limits of one short volume. From any one of these single aspects the life might claim fully twice the space that is at my disposal. My aim therefore has merely been to sketch in a concise form the life of Michelangelo through his works. And with this object in view I have dwelt very little on those productions which are lost to our view, or which, still surviving, illustrate less forcibly the characteristics which have given to him his great place amongst the artists of all time, devoting a large proportion of my space to his greatest achievements in Sculpture, Painting, and Architecture. It is but one more small stone cast upon a cairn which has already been piled high and will hereafter rise yet higher.

It will be seen that this book makes no attempt to deal with the literary side of Michelangelo's life, or with his work as an engineer. I have sought to avoid cumbering the pages by too many footnotes and references, and have left my exact degree of indebtedness to various authorities to be recognised by an appeal to the 'Select Bibliography' which accompanies the book. My thanks are due and are gratefully recorded to Dr. J. H. W. Laing, the Editor of this series, for his invaluable help with my proof-sheets, to my publishers, and to all who in various ways have aided me in my task.

GERALD S. DAVIES

CHARTERHOUSE, E.C.

*June 1909*



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*(Bruckmann, photo.)*

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## CHAPTER I

### EARLY YEARS—CAPRESE AND SETTIGNANO

**I** RECORD how to-day this 6th day of March 1475 was born to me a male child: I gave him the name Michelangelo; and he was born on Monday morning before 4 or 5 o'clock: and he was born to me, I being Podestà of Caprese: and he was born at Caprese: and his godfathers were these persons undernamed. He was baptized on the 8th day of the same in the Church of San Giovanni di Caprese. These are his godfathers, Don Daniello di ser Bonaguida da Forenze, Rector of Santo Giovanni di Caprese'—[Here follow the names of eight others, men of Poppi, Caprese, Casauria, otherwise unknown to us.] 'Note that the 6th of March 1474 is reckoned after the Florentine manner *ab Incarnatione*: in the Roman manner, *ab Nativitate*, it is 1475.'

So wrote in his diary Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni, the father of Michelangelo Buonarroti, he then living with his wife, Francesca di Neri di Miniato del Sera, in the Palazzo, in which his office as magistrate—Podestà—of Caprese had placed him. Great titles these for small dignities. The palace or castle is not so impressive nor so castellated as many a farm-house in those parts: the income of the Podestà, and the duties likewise, less weighty than those of many an English village constable: while the place of which he was justiciar is hardly to be found, being in effect rather an area of vineyards with scattered holdings upon them, than a visible village. Lodovico, born to be poor, had inherited from the Buonarroti Simoni an honoured Florentine name, together with a respectable impecuniosity without the Florentine faculty for business which might have redeemed it. Time was when all writers believed, from Vasari and Condivi onwards, what Michelangelo himself believed in his lifetime (and with full consent of the living Count of Canossa of Reggio), that his family bore

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kinship with that noble house. The stern hand of the document-hunter, which has been laid so heavily on many an ancient fable, has in our own day demolished the harmless belief.<sup>1</sup> Some pride in the tradition,<sup>2</sup> which had perhaps helped to keep him poor, seems to sound in the answer which in a later day Lodovico gave to Lorenzo dei Medici, 'I have never followed any profession : but have always lived upon my small income and attended to the small estate left me by my ancestors, trying not only to keep it up properly, but also to increase it so far as I may with my powers and my diligence.' But the increment which Lodovico's diligence in business may have merited—his standard in this respect was not a very high one—was not forthcoming. And the appointment to the poor post of Podestà in a small country district was welcome to the Buonarroti purse. These appointments were made for short periods only, sometimes it would seem only for six months. The latter appears to have been the length of Lodovico's tenure, commencing 1st September 1474, as it was during his term of office that his son was born at Caprese.

There is after all no circumstance which, viewed truly and viewed alone, is of so little importance in the life of a man as the place where he happens to be born. Often enough it is mere accident, which should bring no responsibility to the place of birth if the life to follow has been one of reproach, and which should therefore logically bring no honour if the case fall out otherwise. But fortunately—else the world would be less interesting than it is—we are not logical in these matters which concern deep-rooted human sympathies. And so the event of that Monday morning has placed the quiet little Casentino territory on the roll of fame. It could, indeed, ill spare that chance event, since neither before nor after is it recorded that anything has happened there which should give it a place on the page of history. It is true that it lies a very few miles south of La Verna, made memorable by the sojourn of Saint Francis, and eighteen miles away to the south lies Arezzo, the home of many an artist. 'If I have anything good in my disposition,' said Michelangelo jokingly to Giorgio Vasari, 'it comes from my being born in the subtle air of your district of Arezzo : just as also I drew in with the milk of my *balia* the chisels and the mallet that I make my figures with.' Close by the place of his birth rises the watershed that divides the head waters of Tiber from those of Arno—curiously typical of the greatness of the man which was destined to

<sup>1</sup> The evidence will be found in G. Milanese, Appendix to Vasari, *sub* MICHELANGELO, ed. 1906.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Condivi, *Life of Michelangelo*.



## EARLY YEARS

flow from its lifspring in this little *paese* downwards both to Florence and to Rome.

But in the arms of his mothering nurse, the *bália*, wife of a stone-cutter at Settignano, the child was soon carried away from Caprese to the hill-village above Florence where Lodovico held his ancestral *podere*. Settignano, which is now joined to Florence by an almost continuous suburb, lies among vines and olives on the low range of hills north-east of Florence, some two or three miles more to the south-east than Fiesole, Maiano being between. From the heart of Settignano, which now bears the name of Piazza Buonarroti, to the Piazza del Duomo of Florence is, for the crow to fly, a little over three miles. The villa of Lodovico lay upon the slopes looking out over the valley of the Arno, with the city stretched out in the plain below. The salient features of that most noble view, the campanile of Giotto, the cupola of Brunelleschi, the watch-tower of the Palazzo Vecchio, and the long roof-lines of many a Florentine church rising above the houses of the fairest city in Europe, these were the same to the eyes of the boy four hundred years ago as they are to us to-day. Only the houses of men have come and gone and been replaced once or more, much as the generations of the men themselves have been replaced; but that which makes Florence herself, Dome and Campanile and Watch-tower, winding river and far-off hills, were the same for him as for us.

And though it counts for little, by itself, where a man is born, it counts for very much indeed—we have no means for weighing the exact how-much—where and on what scenes, and in what interests, and among what men he first opens intelligent eyes a few years later. And Settignano, beautiful in itself, more beautiful in its surroundings, possessed also one speciality which probably had no small effect on a child who was born to use his brain, his eyes, and his hands. The village had been for generations the home of a race of stonecutters. It remains so to this day. As one walks through its high-walled solitary streets, the sound that most often falls upon the ear is the tap, tap, tap of the mallet and chisel. The workshops—perhaps that of his foster-father among the chief—surely fascinated the boy. The first delight of his life was to be amongst his last, the joy of seeing the chips fly. The line which divided the stonecutter from the sculptor, *scarpellino* from *scultore*, was often very narrow and very difficult to define. There are scores of works in stone and marble in Italy which proceeded from this humbler class of artist. Not of the first rank, nor

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of the second, they have about them a feeling and an artistry which may be looked for in vain from such a class of workmen anywhere but in Italy. At times such an one would step across the line and take rank, as Mino da Fiesole did,<sup>1</sup> with the artists of the world. Settignano had already sent out—we read their names in documents—not a few who, stonecutters or sculptors we cannot exactly say, bore the name of their native town. Pagno da Settignano, who worked with Mino and Isaia da Pisa in Rome, is one of the many instances to the point. But chief of all, it is needless to say, stood that refined and exquisite sculptor Desiderio da Settignano, whose name was in every mouth among the craftsmen of his native townlet, where he and his brother Gori had begun life together as workmen in their father's shop. I suspect that to nine people out of ten the little place is known only through the name of Desiderio. It was an ill chance which prevented a greater still from being coupled with its name. It was due to it, more than such honours are often due to other towns, that men should speak of Michelangelo da Settignano.

That such influences should act upon the boy was, however, the last wish of the father. Eminently unpractical himself, and 'following no profession,' he had destined, it would seem, all his sons to trade, save the eldest, Lionardo, who became a Dominican monk, apprenticing the three younger to the *Arte della Lana* or the *Arte della Seta*, wherein, by the way, they proved, through lack of energy or of capacity, to be failures. Michelangelo himself, the second son, was destined for a similar occupation if Nature had not soon expressed her will too strongly. For the present, however, he is sent to the school kept by Messer Francesco da Urbino down in Florence, where he learnt to read and write—the latter in that clear bold hand which makes a page of his writing such a pleasure to the eye—and some other things not exactly set forth to us; one is reminded of Shakespeare's education, which that of Michelangelo resembled probably both in quality and duration. In later days he read Latin only with difficulty, which is not a very remarkable fact, since he was to end his school days before thirteen. It was during his time with Messer Francesco that the direction of the boy's tastes asserted itself with a clearness that brooked no denial. He had, apparently amongst Francesco's schoolboys, found a congenial spirit, Francesco Granacci, two years younger than himself, who appears to have had the means, denied to Michelangelo, of supplying himself with colours and other

<sup>1</sup> Mino da Fiesole was born at Poppi, Fra Angelico at Fiesole.



HEAD OF A SATYR





MADONNA DELLA SCALA

*Casa Buonarroti*



## EARLY YEARS

materials. Vasari, who is evidently not aware of the relative ages of the two boys, tells us that Granacci 'had placed himself under Domenico del Ghirlandaio to learn the art of painting; when, being fond of Michelangelo, and seeing him very apt at drawing, Granacci supplied him daily with the drawings of Ghirlandaio.' The patron of Michelangelo who had thus 'placed himself' under Ghirlandaio was ten years old! It is quite evident that both Vasari and Condivi were under the impression that Granacci was old enough to guide, befriend, and counsel Michelangelo. Condivi's words concerning Granacci are these: 'who, seeing the inclination and burning wish of the child, took counsel how to aid him, and continually exhorted him to his undertaking, now lending him drawings, now taking him with him to the workshops of his master or to some work whence he might gain profit.' This sentence could only have been written by one who believed that he was describing the kindly help of an older boy towards a mere child. We shall have to return to this statement presently in a different context.

Both Condivi and Vasari assert that Lodovico and the elder members of the family set their faces strongly against the wish of the boy to become an artist. His mother had died when he was ten years old—what sympathy she felt or did not feel with her child's tastes we cannot guess; but he met with little sympathy, it would seem, from any other source. He was girded at and even at times beaten, say our authorities, who give as reason that these stern elders regarded that *virtù* as a thing base and unworthy of their family. It reads, if these historians speak truth, like a sad childhood enough, a childhood lacking in sunshine, the forecast of the mood of the grown man that saw life always without a smile in it. The set determination of the boy, added to the advice—and there must have been plenty in Florence to seek advice from—of those who saw the extraordinary capacity of the boy, proved at last too strong for Lodovico Buonarroti. He resolved to allow Nisson to be trained as an artist, and to that end chose for him the *bottega*<sup>1</sup> of Domenico del Ghirlandaio, then the best reputed master in Florence. On April 1st, 1488, Michelangelo being then thirteen years and one month old, the father makes, as is his wont, an entry in his diary. '1488. I record on this first day of April how I, Lodovico de Lionardo di Buonarota, place Michelagnolo my son with Domenico and Davit di Tommaso di Currado for three

<sup>1</sup> I believe I am right in saying it was situated in the neighbourhood of Sant' Ambrogio on the Settignano side of Florence.

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years next to come; with these agreements and terms: that the said Michelagnolo must stay with the aforesaid the said time and learn to paint, and to practise the said exercise and that which the aforesaid shall command him; and the said Davit and Domenico must give him in these three years twenty-four florins of salary; the first year, six florins; the second year, eight florins; the third, ten florins; in all the sum of ninety-six lire.' Heath Wilson calculates the whole sum thus received at £11, 10s. Gotti estimates it at £8, 12s. In both cases, of course, the calculation is made weight for weight, and not in relation to purchasing value.

Lodovico Buonarroti had faced the inevitable. A son of his was to be allowed to earn his living as a painter—not, be it observed, as yet, with any thought of sculpture—the 'stonecutters' trade as Lodovico counted it. The sacrifice had been made. The prosperity and the civic honours which awaited the boy in the Guild of Wool or Silk were to be set aside for Michelangelo,—left to the three<sup>1</sup> younger sons with their better common sense. Fortune plays strange tricks with the dreams and the hopes of fathers for their sons. Lodovico lived to see, forty years later, this headstrong son of his become great amongst the great ones of Italy, while the three brothers were content to take what fell to them from their elder brother's generosity. The perplexities of heredity have no more striking illustration than is here to be found:—Brain power, nervous energy, strength of purpose, capacities of the highest quality in several directions, bestowed by Nature in their fullest bounty upon this one son; with complete contradiction of all these qualities in the case of all the other sons. Vasari would explain it to us by the conjunction of the planets at his birth, 'having Mercury and Venus in union in the second house of Jupiter with benignant influence.' And his explanation can at least claim the merit that we cannot supplant it by a better.

<sup>1</sup> All of these appear to have been apprenticed to the guilds in question originally:—but Giovan Simone turned out a loafer till a late day of life, when Michelangelo bought for him and for Buonarroto, the youngest, a business as cloth merchants. The latter alone married, and was the ancestor of the Buonarroti family which preserved its name to the middle of last century. Sigismondo, the brother who came between these two, presently went soldiering, and from that fell back upon a country life at Settignano, where he seems to have lived as a mere *contadino*. The eldest brother, the Dominican, is not heard of after 1510, when he was dangerously ill in his cell in San Marco.



BATTLE OF CENTAURS AND LAPITHS.

*Casa Buonarroti*





*Berlin Museum*

APOLLO



*Rathshof, near Dorpat*

APOLLO AND MARSYAS



## CHAPTER II

### THE GHIRLANDAIO WORKSHOP—BERTOLDO—THE GARDENS OF THE MEDICI

**G**IORGIO VASARI published the first edition of his *Lives of the Painters* in 1550. Ascanio Condivi della Ripa Transone published his *Life of Michelangelo* in July 1553. Vasari was friendly with Michelangelo; had, as he tells us, between the years 1524-7 studied drawing under him, in Florence, and knew him well. Vasari was also well acquainted with Ridolfo, the painter, son of Domenico Ghirlandaio, who did not die till 1461; to him, probably, Vasari was indebted for most of the details which he used in his *Life of Domenico* and for his account of the relations between Domenico and Michelangelo. Ascanio Condivi, born about 1525, went to Rome and worked under Michelangelo. The relationship appears to have ended by the time Condivi was twenty-six, since, in the year 1551, he writes letters to Lorenzo Ridolfi, in which he declares himself to be young and poor, in a way that suggests that he had no longer the helping hand of Michelangelo. I have already quoted a sentence in the last chapter from his *Life of Michelangelo*, which seems to show that he was misinformed as to the relative ages of his master and Granacci. It is now necessary to quote a further passage from the *Life*, which refers to the period just before 1488, when Michelangelo entered the workshop of Domenico and David del Ghirlandaio, at the time when the father and uncles of the boy were doing their best to discourage him from the pursuit of art. 'They [the father and brothers], who held such art in hatred, quite often beat him severely; to whom, as unconscious of the excellence and nobility of Art, it seemed shame that she should be in their house. Which, although it caused him the greatest distress, none the less was not enough to turn him backwards; so, becoming more courageous, he wished to try to work in colours, and a certain print having been put before him by Granacci, wherein was portrayed the story of Sant' Antonio when he is beaten by the demons, of which one Martin of Holland' (he means Martin Schon-

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gauer) 'was author, a man of power for that time, he did it on a panel of wood; and being helped by Granacci with colours and brushes, he so put it together and drew it, that not only did he cause wonder to whoever saw it, but also envy, as some will have it, to Domenico (the most prized artist of that age as in other things later one can manifestly perceive)<sup>1</sup> who, to make the work seem less marvellous was wont to say it had come out of his own workshop, as if he had had a part in it. In making this little picture, inasmuch as there were, besides the figure of the saint, many strange forms and monstrosities of demons, Michelangelo used such diligence that he coloured no part that he had not first compared with Nature. So that going to the Fishmarket he considered of what form and colour the fins of fish were, of what colour the eyes and every other part, representing them in his picture. Whereby bringing it to the best perfection that he knew, he caused wonder to the world, and, as I have said, envy to Ghirlandaio; which showed itself more when, being asked by Michelangelo for one of his books of drawings, in which were depicted shepherds with their flocks and dogs, landscapes, buildings, ruins, and similar things, he refused to lend them to him. And in truth he had the name of being a bit envious, inasmuch as not only towards Michelangelo did he appear little courteous, but also towards his own brother (Benedetto) whom, when he saw him making great advance and giving good hope of himself, he sent away to France, not so much for the advantage of the brother, as to remain himself the first artist in Florence. Of which I have wished to make mention because it has been told me that the son of Domenico (Ridolfo) is accustomed to attribute the excellence and divinity of Michelangelo in great part to his father, whereas he gave him no help whatever; although Michelangelo does not complain of that, and even praises Domenico, both for his art and for his behaviour.'

From this statement results no small bewilderment. In order to make the story at all effective, and to make its details fit, we must, as I have said, accept it as referring to a period just previous to Michelangelo's entry to the Ghirlandaio workshop; since it is evident that after that time there would have been no need for secrecy, no difficulty in obtaining materials, no need for the services of Granacci, then a boy of ten to eleven years old. We are, then, asked to believe that Ghirlandaio, a man of nearly forty, an artist then at the height of his

<sup>1</sup> This confused statement seems to apply not to our power of perceiving the excellence of Domenico in art, but his envious nature.

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fame, and on other occasions showing himself of a generous and kindly nature, becomes pitifully jealous of this boy of thirteen (not yet under his charge), on the evidence of a cleverly coloured copy from a print. There are few men of Ghirlandaio's experience in art who, when called upon to judge the prospects of a boy of thirteen, would commit themselves to a judgment on the evidence of any copy whatsoever from another man's work—but let that pass. We are next told that Domenico in his envy 'said it came from his own workshop to make it seem less wonderful.' If Michelangelo was not yet with Ghirlandaio this was a lie easily disproved:—but why then should Ghirlandaio presently take this envied young competitor of thirteen into his shop at all? If, on the other hand, the boy was already with him, what becomes of all the picturesque preliminaries which Condivi gives us, and why should Domenico's saying it came from his own workshop be reckoned to him for envy, rather than for pride in his workshop and his pupil? The evidence, however, by which Condivi—who, be it remembered, was writing sixty-five years after the supposed event—supports his charge of envy, is even more remarkable than the framing of the indictment itself. He says that Domenico was even envious of his own brother Benedetto, and sent him away to France for fear that his (Benedetto's) fame should outstrip his own. Those who know the kind of work which poor Benedetto was capable of even at his very best,<sup>1</sup> will at this point feel much tempted to put down Condivi's account and read no further. It is pretty certain that Benedetto Ghirlandaio did go to France for a year or two, it is difficult to say exactly when, and that he did well there; better probably than he could have hoped to do as an independent artist in Florence, since his work is scarcely more than third rate. He was, according to Gaye, the guardian *in loco patris* of Domenico's children during the period of ill-health which preceded the latter's death.

The year 1488 was of the highest importance in the annals of the Ghirlandaio workshop. It was the year in which Domenico completed his altar-piece of the 'Adoration of the Magi' in the Church of the Innocenti, the masterpiece amongst his tempera panels. The frescoes in the Choir of Santa Maria Novella had been in hand just over two years, and were halfway to their completion. The services of two such boys as Michelangelo and Granacci, who had everything as yet to learn of the technics of painting, could hardly be applied except perhaps in

<sup>1</sup> It may be gauged conveniently by examining his most important surviving picture, No. 203 in the Louvre.



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very minute doses, and in very unimportant corners, to works of such importance, where, besides Domenico himself, his brothers David and Benedetto, Mainardi, and the full staff of his powerful workshop were already employed. It is probable that odd jobs, and minor utilities were all that would fall to the lad's share—the grinding and mixing of colours, the cleaning of brushes, helping to pounce and trace cartoons by transference to the wall, and the thousand and one tasks of fetch-and-carry which belong to the technicalities of fresco-painting. And in no workshop could these technicalities have been better learned, nor under more inspiring circumstances than in that of the Ghirlandaii in that particular year. Domenico sturdily eschewed throughout his whole career all new and experimental methods; adhering in face of all temptations to the sound and simple practice which had satisfied Giotto and Masaccio. He has left behind him no authentic work carried out in oil medium. There is no safer painter to be found in Florence in the fifteenth century, none whose works have better stood the test of time. Above all, there was none whose fresco works show greater sense of breadth and largeness. The saying which is recorded of him—that he would he might have the walls of Florence to fresco—is typical of the man. And it counts for much in the career of Michelangelo that he should have learned his first lessons in the technics of fresco-painting in such a workshop. When some twenty years later he fearlessly undertakes the mighty task of the Sistine Roof, the experience of the Ghirlandaio workshop obtained in the Choir of the Novella stands him in good stead. He had nothing to unlearn. The condition of the frescoes in that choir were guarantee to him of the methods which he had seen in use.

It has been suggested that the half-nude figure of the beggar sitting on the steps in the fresco of the 'Presentation of the Virgin' may possibly be due to the boy Michelangelo. This is a view which I cannot myself accept. It is most improbable that so young a boy without any experience of the process should, in the early months of his apprenticeship, have been entrusted with so important a portion of a fresco in so prominent a position. If he had done this figure or indeed any figure of great importance at that age it is pretty certain that the fact would have become, as soon as Michelangelo was famous, and that was no long time after, the common property of every one in Florence, and would certainly have found its way to the ears of Vasari. It is still more difficult to believe that it should have escaped Condivi, for whom it would have proved a valuable addition to his indictment. The nude



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figure in question, as well as other work in the fresco, is in all probability the work of Bastiano Mainardi. Indeed, though we are without exact knowledge on the subject, it would seem, from the scattered anecdotes which relate to this period, that the boys were left a good deal to themselves, and at times found their own employment. Vasari tells us how on one occasion when Domenico had gone out of the chapel, Michelangelo occupied himself in drawing the scaffolding, tressels, and ladders with the men who were working upon them, and that so admirably, that Domenico could only exclaim on finding it, 'This one knows more of it than I.' Again another pupil has made a pen-and-ink copy of a drawing by Domenico for one of the female figures in the frescoes. Michelangelo takes 'that paper' and with a larger pen corrects the outline and sets the figure firmly on its feet in bolder fashion. Whether 'that paper' was the pupil's copy or Domenico's original is not made quite clear, since, in either case, Michelangelo's outline amounted to correcting 'his master's things' (*le cose del suo maestro*). This was a pen-and-ink drawing which in 1550 Vasari, then in Rome, showed to Michelangelo, who declared modestly that he had known more of art in that day than he did now. It cannot therefore be the well-known red-chalk drawing in the Louvre (Plate I.), in which a faun's head in bold strong handling has been worked over a weak outline, which can be seen beneath it, of a woman's head with long plaits falling down the neck. It is likely enough that the boy may have played similar pranks with other drawings by his fellow-pupils,—who were many in number. And perhaps the refusal of Domenico to lend the boy his sketch-book may under the circumstances be easily accounted for without resorting to the theory of the master's jealousy. We read also of a borrowed drawing of a head which was so carefully counterfeited by the boy, that with the aid of smoke and well-imitated sign of wear he was able to return the copy for the original. There is no reason to doubt that the boy was of brilliant power and precocious talent, nor that Domenico was fully conscious of their existence—a fact, be it observed, which would have obviously made his retention in the workshop of the greatest value to his master, first because his assistance would in a year or two have proved invaluable, and secondly, because of the honour which would have accrued thence to the Ghirlandaio name.

Michelangelo's connection with the workshop lasted hardly more than a year. Condivi, who was evidently unaware of the existence of the indentures under which the boy received a salary and was bound

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for three years,<sup>1</sup> gives an account which again makes Granacci, now twelve years old, the patron and guide of this boy who seems so remarkably capable of looking after himself. 'It happened one day that Granacci took him to the Gardens of the Medici at San Marco, where Lorenzo, father of Pope Leo, a man renowned for every excellence, had disposed many antique statues and decorative sculptures. Michelangelo, seeing these things and appreciating their beauty, never afterwards went to the workshop of Domenico, but spent every day in the Gardens, as in a better school.' This account makes Michelangelo, as the disposer of his own destinies, deliberately break his indentures. Vasari, on the other hand, relates that Lorenzo applied to Ghirlandaio—as he probably did to all the leading *maestri di bottega* in Florence—to send to the Gardens any pupils who were of a mind that way, and that Ghirlandaio selected amongst others Granacci and Michelangelo for the privilege. This selection has been explained by later writers as probably resulting from Domenico's desire to get rid of Michelangelo, the view being an enlarged inference from Condivi's charge. The action of Domenico in parting with the two most promising of his younger pupils is wholly consistent with a generous recognition of their powers, and an honourable interest in their prospects. Granacci, the supposed guide, aider and abettor of Michelangelo throughout the piece, who was 'got rid of' at the same time, did not cease his connection with the Ghirlandaio workshop, but a few years later helped to complete the altar-piece in Sta. Maria Novella, being responsible for two wings of the triptych which may be seen to-day in the Berlin Gallery, (Nos. 74-76).

It has, however, been pointed out that the most damaging evidence against Ghirlandaio lies in the fact that Michelangelo, who must have read Condivi's *Life*, took no step to contradict the statements which were so injurious to his old master. I would answer to this that we are quite unable to say that he did not verbally correct the view. It is impossible to compare the opportunities which existed in that age for effective contradiction, with those which exist in this, when a thousand journals, periodicals, magazines, give opportunities of complete self-defence to any person injured or misrepresented by another. In Italy of the sixteenth century nothing short of writing a book would afford such an opportunity. The chances of a statement once made in print being corrected in print were very small indeed. But is it quite certain

<sup>1</sup> The agreement was published in the second edition of Vasari's *Lives*, 1568, fifteen years after Condivi's *Life* had been issued.

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that no such refutation was attempted? Vasari was on very familiar terms with Michelangelo in the years which preceded his second edition. Letters passed continually between them. Vasari probably saw him personally in Rome at intervals. Is it probable that Vasari who undertakes to refute Condivi in that second edition would have done so without privately ascertaining from Michelangelo whether Condivi was right in substance even if wrong in detail? Vasari did his refutation clumsily and badly, using as proof that which was no proof at all, namely, the terms of the original contract. But it must be remembered that contradiction, detail by detail, was impossible with charges made in such vague general terms, when the chief witnesses were all dead. The fact that Benedetto Varchi, in his oration at Michelangelo's funeral, repeated the charges, proves nothing except that he had read Condivi's book. Men do not contradict at a graveside. Ridolfo Ghirlandaio, the only man who could effectually have done so even if it had been decent or possible, was three years dead, and no other son of Domenico Ghirlandaio was living. Varchi could not have seen Vasari's denial, as it was not published till several years later. He merely, using Condivi's *Life*, had spoken according to his brief, and cannot be counted as a fresh witness.

The Gardens of the Medici near San Marco lay along Via Larga to the north-west, where now the Medici Casino is seen. The school for sculptors which existed there was a favourite project of Lorenzo dei Medici, who had gathered there, as we have heard, many fine examples of ancient art, and had placed over it the sculptor Bertoldo. Born so far back as 1410, Bertoldo had been trained in the school of Donatello, was a master of all the technics of bronze casting, and had played an important part in the completion of the bronze pulpits of San Lorenzo, left unfinished by Donatello. As an independent sculptor he had left us few works of high importance, though of late years a considerable number of smaller bronzes in the great collections of Europe have been placed to his name. They show us a sound and capable craftsman with little force of original creation—one who, by the time he had become the guiding spirit in the Medici Gardens, had so far drawn away from the Donatello traditions, that to him in his last days the Roman antique had become the first word on art and the last. It may be indeed doubted whether this well-meant experiment of Lorenzo's was really for the best interests of Florentine Art. The substitution of the Art School for the workshop, even under such favourable circumstances as prevailed in the Medici Gardens, was in itself a doubtful gain.



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In technical matters Bertoldo, though he was now old and feeble, was probably an admirable master : but he represented in its extreme shape the growing tendency of the last half of that century to find salvation always in the antique. Already the admiration of the antique was showing signs of passing into a fetish worship, demanding obeisance in whatsoever form it might present itself. The day was at hand when the appearance of some second-rate or even third-rate work of Roman art—and the second-rate was naturally that which most abounded—was greeted with the same cries of admiration as if it had been a fragment fallen from the Parthenon itself. To this blind worship was mainly due the loss of true standards of taste and selection which was presently to bring Italian Art to its grave in the Barocco. To the artist that loss could mean nothing less than the loss of his power to discern between good and evil. And no single person was more responsible for setting up this fetish than Bertoldo di Giovanni, unless it were the patron Lorenzo himself. Of the capacity of Bertoldo as a teacher to inspire there can be little doubt. Vasari, in his life of Rustici, notices the fact that few who attended the school in the Medici Gardens failed to reach distinction : and in his life of Torrigiano he tells us of its treasures of art, drawings, cartoons, models from the hand of Donatello, Brunelleschi, Masaccio, Paolo Uccello, Fra Giovanni, Fra Filippo and many another ; together with countless examples of antique sculpture. Inspiring teacher, inspiring surroundings,—yet of late years the inspiration had flowed almost entirely into the channels of the antique : and the old tradition of the older Florentine Renaissance, admirably represented, as the names I have quoted will show, had ceased to be the directing influence. By this later Renaissance influence Michelangelo was now to find himself wholly surrounded. Lorenzo himself, Marsilio Ficino, Poliziano, the men who visited the Gardens, and who were presently to be the men who sat at meat with the boy, cast their thoughts and their words, and saw the subjects which they suggested to the young artists of the Gardens, always under a classical shape.

That Michelangelo at once caught fire is plain enough. Very picturesque is the episode which Vasari describes in his best manner, when Lorenzo finds the boy eagerly carrying the head of a Faun which he has set himself to copy and adapt from a battered antique in the Gardens—the first time, it is added, that he had handled mallet and marble, but on this point, we, remembering the workshops of Settignano, may retain our doubts. One seems to hear the good-natured laugh of the Magnifico as he tells the boy that he has for-



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gotten that old folk have not so fine a set of teeth as he has given to his Faun. As soon as Lorenzo has turned his back, out goes a tooth or two and with a little hollowing of the gums you have your aged Faun:—not indeed that mask which is to-day, and for many a long day past has been shown, as this very work,<sup>1</sup> for that is but an inferior piece of stone-cutting by a later hand, but another now lost to us. Then the Magnifico, delighted with the boy and with the incident, sends for Lodovico and offers to take Michelangelo into his own house. Condivi, in telling the tale, makes Lodovico reluctant to allow his son to become a stone-cutter—calls in once more the aid of the irrepressible Granacci, now arrived at twelve or thirteen years, who has first of all to persuade the father to go to the Magnifico, and explains fully the difference between a stone-cutter and a sculptor; which difference, perhaps, Lodovico, who lived at Settignano, might be thought capable of appreciating for himself. Lorenzo (with this previous aid from Granacci) succeeds in persuading the proud owner of the Settignano *podere*, who himself had ‘followed no profession.’ Michelangelo is taken into the Palazzo Medici,<sup>2</sup> and sits daily at the table of the Magnifico with the three sons of the House, Piero, Giuliano, and Giovanni (Leo x.), where also sat their tutor, Poliziano, and from time to time many another whose name was great in letters or in Art. And to rejoice the hearts of father and of son, the one is given a post in the Dogana at seventeen shillings a month, and the other a purple mantle—which latter gift reminds one of Cosimo’s embarrassing present to the homely Donatello. It is all very charming and Vasari-like, and is obviously true in many of the main particulars—though, if Michelangelo had been four years in the Palazzo Medici at the death of Lorenzo in April 1492, it is evident that Michelangelo, born in 1475, must have entered it before he was fourteen, and not when he was fifteen or sixteen.

This dwelling in the company of Lorenzo’s guests must, quite apart from the technical training in the school of the Gardens, have counted for much to a boy whose education had been cut short in its earlier stages, but who was eminently capable, like Shakespeare, in such circumstances, of educating himself. To sit at table with such men as Poliziano, Pico della Mirandola, Marsilio, and Lorenzo himself, and to try to keep in touch with their talk, was in itself a means to that end. There is nothing so stimulating to a young mind, if it be healthy, as to become aware of its ignorance. The defect must have often

<sup>1</sup> Now in the Museo Nazionale (Bargello), No. 124.

<sup>2</sup> Now Palazzo Riccardi.

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enough been apparent to a boy who had left off school before thirteen. The remedy lay close at hand. Though less than forty years had passed since John Gutenberg's invention, printed books were already plentiful, and nowhere more so than in the palace of Lorenzo. That Michelangelo made good use of them there is no doubt. To these years we may trace that love of Dante which later in life earned for Michelangelo the reputation of being one of the leading Dante scholars of his day. To this time also was due that deep admiration for the Bible which Vasari says marked him to the end. The three humanists whom I have named were, in these very years, strongly attracted to the teaching of Savonarola, whose day of greatest power was close at hand. The preaching and the doings of the Frate must have been often the subject of their talk, which was of a far more religious colour than it would have been a few years earlier.<sup>1</sup>

These then were the surroundings of Michelangelo during the five years, from 1489 to 1494—Vasari is in error in speaking of 'four years'—during which he remained in the Palazzo Medici, and was at work in the gardens, while Condivi puts the time of his being with Lorenzo (who died in 1492) at two years, whereas it was three. Bertoldo himself had died in 1491, so that his direct influence upon Michelangelo lasted only two years, and probably very little was seen of him during the last year of his life. But the influences of the school itself remained unchanged. During these same years Michelangelo worked, as all young artists of the day were wont to do, at the frescoes of Masaccio in the Carmine Church. The chapel had become a recognised school of art. It was here, according to Torrigiano's statement to Cellini, that he became so exasperated by the banterings and annoyances of Michelangelo, that he, 'the hulking trooper,' as Cellini describes him, let go a smashing blow full in the face of the offender, who thence carried a broken nose through life.

No one who knows the man will doubt that these years were full of eager impetuous effort, and were productive not merely of acquired skill and mastery over his craft, but of actual works designed and finished in the school of the Gardens. Five years in any period of his life meant much production—it was more than enough for the Sistine roof. There were, it is true, in later life periods of comparative non-production—periods due sometimes to the paralysing presence of

<sup>1</sup> Madonna Clarice Orsini, wife of Lorenzo, had such doubts of the moral influence of Poliziano over her children, that she made strong protest on the point. But at the close of his life the poet became seriously religious, and at his death was buried near Pico della Mirandola in the cloister of San Marco, clad in the Dominican habit.

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conflicting commissions, interruptions, anxieties with which it was fated that his life should abound: due also to those intervals of apparent, not real, quiescence common to all great thinkers, when the mind is wrestling with its unformed ideas and the hand lies idle till it is summoned to its service. But those early years had none of these causes to break the continuous activity of the learner. One would have expected to find many a marble from his hand, and many more attributed to it. And yet, as a fact, we read but of four, one of which, a statue of 'Hercules,' four braccia high, went to France and was last definitely heard of in 1642. The other, the 'Faun's head,' is not in existence. The other two, namely, 'The Battle of the Centaurs,' and the little 'Madonna of the Stairs,' both of them small works, are now in the Casa Buonarroti. The reason of this scarcity is not easy to see. Of course a great deal of his time was spent in drawing from the nude and the antique; some also in modelling in clay; both these practices being followed for the mere purpose of self-training and the acquirement of technique. On the other hand, no time seems to have been occupied in the acquirement of the mere technics of painting—at present his face was set steadfastly towards sculpture. I cannot see any satisfactory reason which we may give ourselves to account for the shortage. Nor have the dealers filled the gap with any large supply of so-called 'young work' to meet the occasion. We must be content to accept it as one of not a few minor problems in a life, wherein with two such contemporary biographers ready to hand as Condivi and Vasari, there should be no detail round which any obscurity remains. The fact is, however, that both these men, in spite of their claiming exceptional means of knowledge and an intimacy of the closest nature with the sculptor, are obviously badly informed about the work of these earlier years.

The 'Battle of the Centaurs' (Plate III.) is the most important of these earliest works. It was suggested to Michelangelo by Poliziano, and is a marble of about twenty inches square in very high relief. As we stand before this small masterpiece—it is not a work which yields up its whole secret to the passing glance—and become aware of the superb yet apparently effortless composition of the group; the balance of the masses; the masterly calculation of the shadows as an element in the expression of the design, and above all the sympathetic treatment of the surface of the marble, and the entire understanding of the needs of bas-relief; we feel at once that this marvellous boy had already equipped himself with all the technical mastery which was



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to be to him the grammar of his speech. For deep far-reaching thought we must not yet look. By the nature of the case it was not likely to be there—was, indeed, hardly needed. It may be doubted whether at any time a subject suggested by another, which has not sprung into existence in the brain of the artist himself, and come into life as a part of the artist's own essence, can ever bear the true mark of inspiration. Still less can that be the case where the subject has been dictated, as it doubtless was here, not merely in its general bearing, but in its very method of presentment. Michelangelo, docile to a degree—this statement must seem a strange contradiction of the impetuous headstrong nature of the boy in other respects, but is none the less true—receives the whole design in chapter and verse set out by his pedantic patron the poet, and finds nothing left to him but the manner of treatment. Here his success is complete. There is no relief of its kind in Italian art which may be put before it. Perhaps the most striking thing about it is that, executed before 1492, that is to say when Michelangelo was sixteen or seventeen years old, it is so completely characteristic of the man, that if it had been found without a record at the bottom of the Arno, it would be recognised on the moment as the work of the master, who from the very first 'saw large.' The limbs here are massive and large; the detail broad and simplified with no such over-dwelling on special points as nearly always characterises the young work of an artist; the finish is of the finest where finish is needed, it is nowhere wasted on parts that do not need it. He had already learnt to see with his own eyes.

A comparison of this relief with the most important known work of his master Bertoldo, now in the Bargello,—a 'Battle Scene,' a relief in bronze, with a wild tumult of horsemen and footmen scattered over the whole surface—at once shows us that Michelangelo was letting himself be guided by his master up to a certain point. It shows us also how wide a gulf divides a Michelangelo, even in his teens, from a Bertoldo in his full maturity. It is, by the way, noticeable that though Bertoldo himself inclined almost entirely to the use of bronze, and was much absorbed in its technicalities, of which he was so accomplished a master, Michelangelo seems to have had little fondness for the material, and very few of his works were executed in it. Indeed, when he was called upon to carry out the great bronze statue of Pope Julius for Bologna, he protested that he had 'little knowledge of that manner of work,' to which the Pope replied that he might go on casting till he succeeded. Michelangelo indeed was in the truest



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sense a sculptor—according to the literal and original meaning of the word—one who carves his ideas out of stone or wood, rather than one who builds up his ideas out of clay. He thought of his craft as one which concerned itself with mallet and chisel rather than with modelling-tool and furnace. His choice in this respect was taken from the first, and he was true to it to the last. In extreme old age he found no better relief from his cares and disappointments, than the use of his mallet and chisel on his beloved marble.

Recently there has been added to our list of work belonging to these earliest years a small oval relief in Carrara marble, which is now in the possession of the family Liphart at Rathshof, near Dorpat. It represents 'Apollo and Marsyas' (Plate iv.), and its original can be traced with certainty to a cameo which once existed in the possession of the Medici. The relief was noticed in the eighties by K. E. von Liphart, who saw it in the vestibule of a house in the Lungarno alle Grazie in Florence, where it had been built into a wall. The owner set small store by art but great store by his own tranquillity, and, by no means approving of the attentions which the discovery brought upon his home, forbade all inspection other than could be obtained by peering through the grating. By what charm the dragon was induced to relax his guard over the golden apple I do not know, but eventually the relief passed to its present resting-place. It is known that Lorenzo frequently showed to Michelangelo his ancient cameos, gems, and medals, and allowed him to copy them: we know also that it was no uncommon thing for the artists of that day to adopt a motive from such sources. In this case, some other artist, probably one of Bertoldo's pupils, also copied the cameo on a plaquette. The plaquette survives though the cameo has disappeared, and it enables us to recognise the source from which the relief was adapted. There is no evidence of any kind other than that of style for the authorship of the work: nor is that authorship universally admitted. There are still many who deny it a place in the list of the master's works—even of his earliest works. For my own part, I frankly admit that I stand in the position of a convert, and that I think the weight of probability is in favour of this relief being one of the earliest works—possibly even itself the earliest—which came from the boy's hand, a set exercise under Bertoldo's direction. It is very young, even weak work, such as a boy just turned fourteen might do. But it has a largeness and simplicity of view, and a fine power of omitting all non-essentials, which makes one ask oneself, what other young artist—for no one will for one

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instant think it to be the work of a mature one—was there who would have seen the subject with these same eyes? The circumstances of the case seem to limit our choice to those who were trained in the school of the Gardens, since no other would have had access to the Medici cameo for purposes of copying. Can we think of Torrigiano, or of Jacopo Sansovino, or of Rustici, or indeed of another as likely to have produced this work at any time in their career? With all its shortcomings the work has a forecast of greatness in it such as belonged to none of these. And in this forgotten fragment I believe that we may rightly recognise one of the very earliest exercises of the young master's chisel.

The other work, also in the Casa Buonarroti, is a marble of the Madonna in low relief (Plate II.), seated and looking to the left, while she holds the Child in her left arm. To the left of the composition steps are seen with three figures, which give to the marble the name of the 'Madonna della Scala.' We are told by Vasari that the relief once belonged to Lionardo, the sculptor's nephew, and he adds that it was done by Michelangelo 'wishing to counterfeit the manner of Donatello.' The relief itself quite corroborates the latter portion of the statement. The work is not one of great original strength, and displays certain defects, which are easily seen—such as the smallness of the head in proportion to the body, and the somewhat clumsy projection of the ball and sole of the right foot, and the over-large hand—not very serious defects in what is evidently a very early work, and counting for little when set against the great beauty and dignity of the lines of the composition, and against the feeling which pervades the whole. It is not in such a work, the professed endeavour to counterfeit the manner of another man, that we should naturally look for marked indications of the individuality of the author. Nevertheless there is much in it which already speaks of the preferences which show themselves in Michelangelo's work through life. (The large, majestic build of the figure of the Madonna: the sense of mystery which hangs about her, making her at once the ancestress of all his Sibyls and his Madonnas. Above all, the love of a twisted pose for the Child, who here, as in the San Lorenzo 'Madonna,' turns his back upon the spectator. All these points help us to see the future of the grown man in this effort of the boy. It is indeed an interesting chance that has left us, as the only guaranteed works of his earliest prentice days two examples which are so completely typical of the two branches of his Art, the classical and the religious, as the 'Battle of the Centaurs,' and

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the 'Madonna of the Steps.' It is to be noticed that the folds of the Virgin's robes are arbitrary, and though they are finished with the most exquisite caressing of the marble, and brought to a most enjoyable texture, they are not true to fact, and lie flatly and picturesquely against the figure, rather than take their shape from the limbs beneath them.

The death of Lorenzo came on April 8th, 1492, and the change, which all who knew the character of the young Medici must have long dreaded, made itself felt at once. Lorenzo had spared no pains to surround his sons with all that should have made for culture, but he had omitted the elements that make for manliness and for the worthier qualities that go with it. The system, at least in the case of the two elder boys, Piero and Giuliano, failed even from the point of view of culture. The paths had been smoothed and broadened before the feet of the two boys, but they themselves set no foot thereon. The school in the Gardens continued, and Michelangelo sat at the table of Piero di Lorenzo as he had sat in the days of Lorenzo himself. But it was time for him to be going. The often quoted reply of Piero to one who had praised the gifted young sculptor to the new lord of Florence may of course be read as a mere assumption of Philistinism, not uttered in earnest. He is said to have replied that he knew he had two clever men about him, Michelangelo and his Spanish groom. But the sorry joke could never have been made by his father. Two years of the rule of Piero were enough to disgust all save those whose fortunes were most closely linked with those of the Medici. Michelangelo foresaw the coming storm—there were few save the foolish lads themselves who did not—and knew his own danger. He left Florence secretly by night in the month of October 1494, a few weeks only before Piero di Lorenzo, followed by his brothers Giuliano<sup>1</sup> and the Cardinal Giovanni, fled by the same gate. Michelangelo has been reproached with cowardice for his action. But, it may be asked, of what possible use could he, an artist still in his teens, have been to the Medici in stemming the popular fury? In politics he was of course less than a cypher. He could exercise no influence over the coming fate of the Medici directly or indirectly. Condivi tells the story that Michelangelo's action was due to a thrice-repeated dream which the court buffoon Cardiere had divulged to him—in which Lorenzo appeared and bade the jester warn his son Piero of his coming expulsion. It does

<sup>1</sup> Giuliano, Count of Nemours, whose body lies in the sarcophagus of the Medici Chapel. Giovanni, Pope Leo x., is buried in the Minerva, Rome.



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not appear why Lorenzo appeared to the jester instead of to his son at first hand, nor why the jester contented himself with telling Michelangelo. It needed not the aid of any dreamer to foretell what was to come, and whether Michelangelo was in the counsels of Cardiere or no, he probably saw plainly that the Casa Medici had ceased to be a shelter for an artist. When the storm broke Michelangelo was in Bologna.







SHRINE OF ST. DOMINIC

*S. Domenico, Bologna*

## CHAPTER III

### THE WANDERJAHR IN BOLOGNA 1494-5

WHEN Michelangelo with two companions set forth on the north road to Bologna their first halting-place would probably be Pistoia, then as now a treasure-house of art, and especially of sculpture of the early days of its revival in Tuscany. Here, since we have no records of earlier visits to Pisa, Siena, or even Lucca, he made his first acquaintance with the work of Giovanni Pisano, whose pulpit had now stood in Sant' Andrea for some two hundred years. Later in his life, when he had had fuller acquaintance with the works of Niccolò and his son, Michelangelo was to let us hear some echo of his admiration, which so far as I know he never expressed verbally, in the vault of the Sistine, where, with very different handling, he used for his Sibyls and their prompting genii the same motive which had been used by these great pioneers of his craft. As we look to-day in S. Andrea of Pistoia at Giovanni's exquisite angle-statuettes of the 'Sibyls,' especially that of the 'Delphica,' which, small of size, is yet as large in feeling as a Sibyl of the Sistine, we can understand that such work was fit to inspire even a young Michelangelo. For no man was ever more capable, in spite of his own strong personality, of admiring and learning from all that was best in those who had gone before. Impatient of all falsities and affectations in art, he was nevertheless generous in his admiration of all good work:—a learner as well as a worker from the earliest days at Settignano to the last hour of his old age in Rome. And in this first excursion of his into the outer world, half exile, half 'wanderjahr,' he was to be brought in contact with one or two influences whose effects are traceable far down into the progress of his art.

The comrades—we know not who the other two were—seem to have made but a short stay at Bologna, and then to have pushed on to Venice. Of their sojourn at this latter place, of Michelangelo's feelings concerning anything he saw there, and of anything which he did there,

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neither Condivi nor Vasari has given us any gossip great or small. They are made simply to go and to return. But on reaching Bologna for the second time, Giovanni Bentivoglio, son of that Annibale Bentivoglio, whose equestrian effigy by Niccolò dell' Arca is to be seen in San Giacomo, was now Lord of Bologna, and had devised for the safety of his city a somewhat primitive form of passport, which consisted of affixing a stamp of wax to the thumb-nail of the traveller. Ignoring this formality, the three travellers were arrested and condemned in a fine of fifty lire. The fine fell upon empty pockets, and the three youths sat disconsolate in the guard-room. Here they were found by Gian Francesco Aldovrandi, a Bolognese gentleman and member of the Council of Sixteen, who, having a sympathy with artists, released them and took Michelangelo to his house. Here he proved himself a welcome guest to a man of taste who delighted to hear Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio read as a Tuscan only can read them. He was Aldovrandi's guest for the greater part of a year.

And during this sojourn at Bologna, Michelangelo was brought within the influence of a sculptor, Jacopo della Quercia, who, some seventy years earlier, had shown in his art some of the very qualities which were to distinguish the younger man. Besides the tomb of Antonio Bentivoglio<sup>1</sup>—a work not wholly from Quercia's own chisel—Bologna possesses in the superb portal of San Petronio a masterpiece not merely of Quercia's art, but of all Italian art. Of the influence of his work upon Michelangelo there can be no question. Indeed if Michelangelo can be said to have had a forerunner among Italian sculptors we must look for him in Jacopo della Quercia.

So far as actual work is concerned, the year spent at Bologna was not very productive,—the sculptor himself seems to have thought he was wasting time. The only commission which he received was from Aldovrandi himself. In the church of San Domenico, the Arca or chest containing the relics of the Saint had been originally, with or without the aid of Niccolò Pisano,<sup>2</sup> made by Fra Guglielmo of Pisa, who, having completed his task, escaped with a stolen rib of the Saint and left in exchange a work of very great beauty, but of

<sup>1</sup> This monument, originally in S. Niccolò, Ferrara, was designed for a certain Vera, and was bought by Annibale Bentivoglio and set up,—probably lacking certain portions,—in a very cramped position, in the church of S. Giacomo Maggiore at Bologna, where it is now seen.

<sup>2</sup> The question of the share of Niccolò Pisano in the design and in the actual work of the shrine cannot of course be discussed here. At least five sculptors from first to last have left their handiwork upon the shrine as we see it to-day.





ST. PETRONIUS



AN ANGEL.

*S. Domenico, Bologna*

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severe simplicity of design. The more elaborate splendour of such shrines as that of S. Peter Martyr at Milan, and of S. Agostino at Pavia, with their multitude of statuettes and pinnacles, made the worshippers in San Domenico discontent with their more modest shrine. Niccolò da Bari, who presently earned the name of *dell'arca*, was employed late in the fifteenth century to enrich the original design by adding the statuettes with which we now see it surrounded. He died the year before Michelangelo's visit to Bologna, leaving two statuettes unfinished, as well as one of the angels who kneel, bearing lights, on either side of the shrine. Aldovrandi<sup>1</sup> commissioned Michelangelo to supply the statuettes of 'San Petronio' and 'San Procolo,' and also the missing angel. Of these the 'San Procolo'<sup>2</sup> was in 1572 broken by the fall of a ladder. The two other works are still as they were left. They have a special interest in the career of the sculptor as being the first works to which a date can be accurately assigned. If we find ourselves less attracted by them on other grounds, and if we miss from them that strong personality which we should have expected even in a young work by Michelangelo, the reason is not far to seek, and is wholly honourable to him as an artist. He was called upon to carry out a task which could hardly have been to his liking. He had to bring himself into line with a man whose art had no affinity with his own: to suppress his own personality to such an extent that his own work should not cry out above that of Niccolò dell' Arca: and that there should be no triumph for himself at the expense of the general harmony of the design. To a young and ambitious artist, full of original ideas and eager to express them, the temptation in this, his first commission away from Florence, must have been very great to let himself go. His loyalty to his artistic conscience becomes evident to any one who stands before the statuette of 'San Petronio' (Plate VI.) the second from the left of these which mount guard upon the original 'arca.' Its superiority in workmanship and in design to all the others is evident enough, but the figure in no way obtrudes itself beyond them. Michelangelo has not attempted to create a new or striking type. He has been content to employ that which Jacopo della Quercia had already created in the lunette of the church of San Petronio—a type which had thereby become familiar to the eyes and affections of the Bolognesi. The

<sup>1</sup> The wooden 'Crucifix,' now lost, which he executed for his friend the Prior of Santo Spirito in Florence, and the 'Hercules,' also lost, are his first recorded works done as a commission.

<sup>2</sup> The angel has lost a middle toe.



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Saint, in his bishop's mitre and robes, holds in his left arm the model of the city with its famous leaning towers—Quercia had given to the Saint the model of his church. The work is highly finished, and the drapery finely expresses the action of the limbs beneath, which support with a slight effort the heavy weight of the city of Bologna. One does not become, at mere first sight, conscious of the masterly nature of the craftsmanship. If the statuette is compared with the Saint on the left by Niccolò da Bari, which is one of his best, a simple and quiet but somewhat empty presentation of a monk in his picturesque dress, the difference of expressiveness at once makes itself felt. One is a man in the dress indeed which befits him, of a bishop, but the man first and foremost is there. The other is a picturesque monk's dress, with a figure under it to support it, but first and foremost it is a dress.

More attractive, and more informed with the spirit of the master, though still loyal to the same principle of self-suppression, is the kneeling figure of the angel bearing the candlestick (Plate VII.) which is placed on the right-hand side of the altar-shelf, facing the earlier angel of Niccolò da Bari, which is seen upon the left. Once more, in estimating this work, one has to remind oneself that the sculptor was not working with a free hand. The angel of Niccolò, not a work of the highest order, is still graceful and pleasing, cast in the sweet but not forceful mould which was gradually becoming the accepted convention of Italian sculpture—often now hardly more than a pretty acolyte. One may doubt whether, even in his boyhood, Michelangelo would for himself have so read the office of the angel. But here he had no alternative. He feels bound to make his boy angel so accord with that of Niccolò that there shall be no conflict between them. His angel is, to be sure, of a stronger, more robust type, fitter for service, abler to bear message. The face and the limbs beneath the strong thick folds are of a more massive, less effeminate type. The beauty of wholesome boyhood is over it all; the message that this angel bears is that of pure young humanity. The workmanship is of the best: the marble is wrought to a surface like that which we have seen in the 'Madonna della Scala.' Already his preference for thick materials which shall give broad and massive folds, has declared itself even in these works upon so small a scale. The hands and feet are finely wrought. The hair, thick clustered in short curls about the large broad skull, is the note in the statuette which alone reminds one of the antique. It is not till we come to the wings that we find, to our surprise, that the study of form, of the bones and true wing-



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structure, has given place to a loving record of surface form of feather and down. For the wing, whose inner surface is presented to us, is untrue to nature, and not only misses the anatomical emphasis of the bones and their resulting forms, being pleasantly and conventionally softened into a round, but it ignores the true set and overlapping of the feathers in favour of a picturesque confusion of shapes. As a piece of surface the result is delightful:—but the point is well worth noticing, and very striking in one who had quite recently given days and nights at Florence, even to the injury of his health, to the practical study of human anatomy. To explain it to ourselves we must already begin to write ‘human’ with a capital letter. It is *human* anatomy, *human* form, and all that belongs to *human* form, including the drapery which covers and follows it, that has already absorbed him almost entirely. He threw himself heart and soul into the study of human anatomy, as the most intimate and final chapter of the human form which had already become to him the alphabet and the grammar of his art. When he comes to carve a wing his observation and his anatomy are no better than, nor even so good as, that of Donatello or Ghiberti. How, one by one, all natural forms, beast and bird and tree and flower, disappear from his art and leave the human form as his one means of expressing all facts human and divine, physical and spiritual, is a fact familiar to every student of the master. I can recall few instances where wing form, or bird form has occupied his chisel or his pencil. The owl in the ‘Notte,’ a finely drawn eagle in a pencil sketch, the wings of the swan in the ‘Leda,’ these seem to be all the instances that one remembers, though there may be others. It is noticeable that angels occur but rarely in Michelangelo’s art, and that they do not again follow the traditional winged type which he uses in the shrine of San Domenico. In the ‘Last Judgment’ the angels are massive, wingless, human forms.

With regard to the ‘Saint Proculus’ statuette, at the left end of the shrine, neither Condivi nor Vasari mentions it. But one Fra Lodovico da Pretormo has left it on record that the ‘Saint Proculus’ was ‘done by a Florentine youth named Michelangelo directly after the death of Niccolò Schiavone called “dell’ Arca.”’ The statuette was broken by a ladder on August 4, 1572, and it is recorded that it was *rifatto*, re-made, by Prospero Spani called Clemente da Reggio. A good many critics now believe that the statuette which we see is that of Michelangelo merely mended and replaced by the aforesaid Clemente. The legs of the statuette have certainly been broken in

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several places and badly mended. But one has to ask, if Clemente merely joined the broken pieces together—a task which any one from a marble cutter to a china-mender or even the most ordinary amateur can perform—why should his name be recorded at all in the matter? A thousand such repairs may be quoted where the repairer naturally has remained nameless. So too would Clemente unless his work had amounted to something more. But even if one accepts the view that Clemente merely mended the statuette, one is in that case, in view of the style of the work, compelled to say that Fra Lodovico had been mistaken in attributing the original statuette to Michelangelo's hand.

Meanwhile Piero dei Medici had fulfilled his destiny and was an exile from Florence, seeking refuge at first in Bologna. We hear of no renewal of the relations between the once table-companions. The lapse of a year allowed time for things to settle down in Florence. At Bologna Michelangelo had, beyond these works at San Domenico, found nothing to do, and what he had done earned for him the jealousy of the sculptors of Bologna. He was losing time, and it was no far cry to his own city. One may imagine the pleasure with which he once more caught sight of the Tower of Giotto and the Dome of Brunelleschi, above the olives and the cypresses of Val d'Arno.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE NATIONAL GALLERY PANELS

**B**EFORE we pass on to the doings of Michelangelo after his return from his 'wanderjahr' in the northern cities, it may be of advantage to step aside to consider a question of great interest which arises in some sort out of his first stay at Bologna. In the last chapter it was seen that the journey was by no means prolific in commissions, and that beyond the three statuettes for San Domenico little resulted from a year in which the activity of the artist's mind may be taken as an accepted fact. How was he occupied during the year? The time spent in the journey to Venice, with probably some delay at Ferrara and Padua, must of course be deducted; but when that deduction has been made, there remains a considerable surplus of spare time which is unaccounted for. An English authority, Mr. C. J. Holmes, has recently made a suggestion of great interest,<sup>1</sup> which induces me to re-write at this point that portion of a chapter which dealt with the two unfinished panels of our National Gallery, No. 809, the 'Holy Family,' and No. 790, the 'Entombment,' both of them bearing in the catalogue the name of Michelangelo. Briefly, Mr. Holmes sees in the painting of the master strong influences derived from the school of Ferrara. He would fill up the gap in the painter's year at Bologna by suggesting that he may have practised painting under the influence of some master of the school of Ferrara then settled in Bologna, and he suggests the possibility that the unfinished panels of our National Gallery may belong to that period of the artist's life.

I had myself during a visit to Bologna in the spring of the same year (1907) been greatly impressed by the affinity of style and feeling which the masterpiece of Francesco Cossa, the 'Virgin Enthroned between St. Petronius and another Saint,' shows with the work of the younger master. I go so far as to think that one who viewed that

<sup>1</sup> See *Burlington Magazine*, July 1907, article 'Where did Michelangelo learn to Paint?' C. J. Holmes.



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picture—one of the most impressive works in the Gallery—without knowledge of the respective dates of the men, would be apt to attribute Cossa's work to an artist who, as no mere imitator, had caught something of the best spirit as well as of the handling of the great Tuscan. But Francesco Cossa of Ferrara had lived for some time in Bologna, and was dead long before the year of Michelangelo's first visit, leaving work in several of the churches of that town, including this particular picture. Other Ferrarese masters had left frescoes in Bologna which were visible at that date. Nor must it be forgotten that during his journey northwards at Ferrara itself the young sculptor had opportunities of seeing the works of the Ferrarese school in its earlier days. If we select two men only, Francesco Cossa and Cosimo Tura, we shall find in their work certain qualities which would appeal strongly to the preferences of the young Tuscan. The school of Ferrara in the fifteenth century had visibly derived its influences from Mantegna and even more from Piero della Francesca. Grave and austere, even to dryness, but never without a redeeming dignity of aim, and often with great largeness of handling, the best masters of the school, such as Cossa and Tura, deny themselves the qualities which fascinate most readily, namely, grace of expression, charm of colour, suavity of line, for the sake of breadth and largeness of form, and a certain plastic or even statuesque treatment of the figure and drapery. The best instances that can be quoted are Cossa's masterpiece (No. 64) the 'Madonna Enthroned amidst Saints' at Bologna, and Tura's 'St. Jerome' at Ferrara. The saints in Cossa's picture are cast in the mould of the Sistine prophets, and Tura's 'St. Jerome' is hardly less fit to be of their company.

But though I hold that, so far as visible affinity is concerned, one may assure oneself that the work of such a man as Cossa was of the kind to impress the young student who, though he had been made fully acquainted with the technical processes of tempera seen daily in use in the school of Ghirlandaio, had probably not yet had any serious practice in painting, I had not gone so far as to consider the likelihood of his having found his opportunity for practical work with the brush while he was at Bologna. There is nothing at all improbable in Mr. C. J. Holmes's suggestion that there was, in addition to mere influences received, also direct practice in the technique of some Ferrarese master who was then in Bologna. This master could not of course have been Cossa. But there were other painters of Ferrara at work in the city who were quite capable of imparting their



HOLY FAMILY

*National Gallery, London*



THE ENTOMBMENT

*National Gallery, London*



## THE NATIONAL GALLERY PANELS

technique, though it is not essential to the theory to suppose that Michelangelo should have placed himself under any special master. He could well have worked independently, copying in one of the churches—as men did in the Carmine in Florence—or upon creations of his own designing. It is this last possibility which brings us to the question of the two panels of the National Gallery. It is suggested that they were produced by Michelangelo at Bologna during his first visit in 1494 and were carried away with him on his return to Florence. No inventory has come down to us of the contents of the studio in the Via Mozza at Florence, which for the last thirty years of the master's life had been shut up, but it will not be forgotten that Vasari vaguely mentions various unfinished works in tempera by Michelangelo, of the fate of which we are in ignorance.

The smaller of the panels, No. 809, the 'Madonna and Child with St. John and Four Angels' (Plate VIII.), has been, like its companion the 'Entombment' No. 790, the subject of many a discussion and is doubtless still destined to be so. To mention but a few opinions out of the many which have been given, Heath Wilson unhesitatingly accepts it as a work of the master before the age of twenty. Sir Charles Holroyd describes it as a work executed upon a cartoon of the master by another hand, probably that of Bugiardini, who was with him in the Sistine; and lastly, we have the opinion quoted above, which assigns it to his 'wanderjahr' at Bologna. A fourth view would assign it to one of his pupils or followers at a later date in the master's lifetime, either from a cartoon furnished by him, or at least under his influence. Others have definitely assigned it to Jacopo Pontormo. Nor does this exhaust the list of suggestions which have been made with regard to this very interesting panel, and to its neighbour.

Certainly if this work, the 'Madonna and Child with Angels,' is from the actual hand of the master, then it can only be of a very early date in his career, and no period or circumstances fit the requirements better than those which Mr. C. J. Holmes has suggested. It cannot be a work by a pupil at so early a date, as he obviously had neither pupil nor helper at such a period of probation. Nor does it carry conviction as a work executed on a cartoon by the master at a later date, even if we allow for the intervention of a pupil's hand. It is difficult, for example, to assign the design to so late a period as that of the Sistine vault, by which time the master was thirty-three to thirty-nine years old, and yet before that period, so far as we know.

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there were no relations between him and Bugiardini as master and assistant, nor indeed had any circumstances arisen in his career, except the 'Cartoon of Pisa,' (1504) which should call for the aid of assistants in painting. And the cartoon never reached the stage of colour in which assistants would be necessary. Vasari in his description of the Sistine work (1508) speaks as if Michelangelo had then for the first time gathered assistants about him 'to teach him the art of fresco painting,' and though the reason given is foolish, the fact is probably stated correctly. Before the year 1508 Michelangelo, though he could not have dispensed with studio helpers in his sculpture, would seem to have had no need for any assistants in painting to whom he could have supplied cartoons for execution. When we turn from chronological data to the internal evidence of the picture itself the difficulty is somewhat increased. It is, on the one hand, hard to recognise the simple and direct handling of the master in the somewhat overwrought surface and the slightly stippled effect of the draperies and in the presence of second touchings in the shadows: it is equally difficult to recognise any foundation for the work save in a design by Michelangelo in his youth. I would draw especial attention to the face of the little St. John, whose type will be found again several times among the *putti* and the inspiring genii of the Sistine vault. So too, the angel seen full-face has great affinities with the types of young humanity which are to be found throughout that work. The smallness of the hands and of the feet is a difficulty in the way of regarding this picture as an original work from the hand of the master himself, but the difficulty is hardly made less if we suppose that the work is by a pupil proceeding on a cartoon by the master. This feature would have surely existed in the cartoon itself, otherwise it would not have been transferred. And in this connection so far as the name of Giuliano Bugiardini is concerned, a paragraph in Vasari's life of that artist becomes of great value. He states that Albertinelli selected him to finish a work of Fra Bartolommeo's because he had observed the strict fidelity with which Bugiardini would follow any drawing entrusted to him. This suggests that, if Bugiardini was the executant, the smallness of the hands had appeared in the original cartoon. Mr. Holmes would account for this peculiarity by suggesting that some Ferrarese artist may have had a share in the actual preparation of the cartoon itself. In favour of the opposite view of the case which assigns the work to Bugiardini or to Pontormo or another, it is urged that the former had been a fellow-scholar with

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Michelangelo in Ghirlandaio's workshop and that our master was at all times good-natured in supplying cartoons to other artists: a fact which might certainly negative my previous objection. With regard to Pontormo it is beyond dispute that he carried out several works from the master's cartoons, though not at so early a date as would seem to belong to the National Gallery 'Holy Family.' In a question which is beset with difficulties I can only express the view, which might, I am conscious, disappear on the production of the slightest documentary evidence, that we are here probably looking at a very early work commenced by the master himself, either in the year (1504) of his first sojourn in Bologna, or soon after his return to Florence: but that we do not see the work as he left it, but with much subsequent overpainting and retouching, not necessarily from the hand of pupil or assistant in Michelangelo's lifetime, but more probably at a later date to improve it to the taste of some owner or picture dealer.

The unfinished picture in tempera of the 'Entombment' (Plate IX.), No. 790 in our National Gallery, presents even greater difficulties. The picture, painted on panel, 'partly, if not entirely in tempera,' says the catalogue, is unfinished, consisting in many parts of the bare primed panel, and in no part completely executed. The history of the picture is interesting. It was once in the collection of Cardinal Fesch, passed through various vicissitudes, and in 1845 was sold by the Principe di Musignano to a Roman dealer in whose shop it was seen, obscured by dirt, by Mr. D. Robert Macpherson, in those days a well-known figure in Rome. Presently the dealer brought an action against the purchaser for recovery, but without effect. It is to this trial that we owe the first crop of conflicting opinions, amongst which that of Cornelius the German painter is most often quoted: '*un vero originale di Michelangelo.*' From this opinion there has been much dissent. In the absence of all documentary evidence or contemporary notice (Vasari merely drops the hint that there were many unfinished works existing by Michelangelo) it becomes a question of the master's style and manner of design and draughtsmanship. Probably all who have endeavoured to assure themselves on the point—no matter with what result,—have passed through the same stages of questioning as they have stood before the picture. Is this work strong enough in its design, large enough in its manner of seeing, and possessed of the great qualities of draughtsmanship which would place it on a level with the known works of the master? And if we are not satisfied on that point, what master can we think of who would



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have been capable of producing a work such as this, which certainly does present many characteristics of Michelangelo, and is a work of power, though not perhaps of the greatest power? In all works where no documentary evidence exists, and where the evidence of style is not clear enough to remove all doubt, there are two questions, the one positive and direct, the other negative and depending on a process of elimination. It is not possible in these pages to go into either question with the completeness which alone could make them profitable. Briefly, we have to ask ourselves much the same questions in the case of the 'Entombment' as we had in the case of the 'Holy Family.' 1. Is this a design which has reached us unalloyed from the hand of Michelangelo? 2. Is it the work of an assistant or pupil, upon a cartoon supplied by the master? 3. Is it wholly from another source, merely reproducing with more or less truth the spirit of the master? With regard to the third of these questions I can only believe that this work is in direct connection with Michelangelo. With regard to the second question the names of Granacci, Sebastiano del Piombo, and Pontormo, not to speak of others, have been mentioned. I confess myself unable to find amongst any of these names one which gives us less difficulty if we accept it, than the name of the master himself, difficult as that undoubtedly is. I would also make an observation which has probably occurred to many others, that if we assign the execution to another hand—say that of Pontormo—the reason for the unfinished state of the picture at once disappears! There is no very visible reason why an assistant or follower should not have carried it to its end; but we can understand from what we know of the master himself, that, dissatisfied with the design, or weary of processes when once the main thought had gone out from him and been expressed, he should have left the blocked-out panel just as he left his blocked-out marbles. A follower working on the master's cartoon, at a fixed and lower level of heat throughout, is less likely to abandon it because the inspiration has died out or because the design disappoints him.

The very defects of the design in this picture tell somewhat, I think, in favour of its being an early work of the master himself. One may point to the figure of Mary Magdalene which is supporting the body of the Saviour as one which is in some respects unsatisfactory in its design, and yet has a certain stately and expressive quality which makes it very unlike the work of an assistant. An imitator

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would have avoided the defect while he missed the character. An assistant merely transferring a cartoon would have either transferred it more literally, if no such defect existed in it, or would have taken leave to correct it to a less noticeable type. And if the Burlington House tondo be compared with this panel, a certain affinity will be observed between the setting on of the head of the Virgin in the marble—not Michelangelo's happiest rendering—and that of the Magdalene in the panel. The head of the Joseph, again, is of the type which we find in the tondo of the Uffizi—though this fact, it may be remarked, is also claimed as a proof that the work is by an imitator of a date subsequent to that of the well-certified Uffizi picture. There is much in the picture of the spirit as well as of the technical characteristics—mannerisms if it please us to call them so—of the master. The mixture of force and restraint in the figures of the two bearers, the suppression of superficial emotion in the features, all expression being left to the bodily forms in their helpful, tender strength, is of the spirit of the man, and just the spirit which imitator or follower invariably missed. The powerful twisted attitudes of the main actors, the helpless almost contorted form of the Saviour's lifeless form—such as we see again in the 'Pietà' of Florence and of Palestrina—and the plastic modelling of the figures, are entirely of his preferences. I can only give it as my opinion that here also we have an original work of the master's young days abandoned like so many others either because he was dissatisfied with its design, or because, as so often happened, it failed to carry on his interest at full heat. The obvious overpainting of the picture in many parts seems to me to require no further explanation than the sorry reason given in the previous case.

The *tondo* which bears his name at Vienna, though it is of interest in connection with the influence of the painters of Ferrara—being a work by some not first-rate master of that school—I need not here discuss. The lunette in the sacristy of the church of San Martino at Lucca, which is affixed to Domenico Ghirlandaio's fine picture of the 'Virgin Enthroned,' is a tempera painting of the 'Entombment,' in which the torso and upper portion of the legs are seen above the stone sarcophagus. It is not of Ghirlandaio's work, and is sometimes claimed as a work by Michelangelo in his youth. There are obvious defects of drawing in the arms and hands, but the general rendering of the figure is fine and expressive. I cannot, however, regard the lunette as the work of the master even in

his younger days, though the reasons for the attribution are not difficult to understand.

NOTE.—Since this chapter was in manuscript in its final form a most important contribution to the question, as it concerns the 'Entombment' picture, has been made by Sir Charles Holroyd. He has recognised among the drawings of the Louvre an original study by Michelangelo for the figure of the Madonna on the right of the picture. The reader will at once perceive the bearing of this discovery on the question discussed in the foregoing chapter, which I have, however, thought it best to leave as it was written. The recognition of this study seems definitely to connect the design of the National Gallery panel with Michelangelo. It does not of course finally dispose of the question whether the panel of the 'Entombment' was carried out by the hand of the master himself.



## CHAPTER V

### RETURN TO FLORENCE—FIRST VISIT TO ROME (1495-1501)

WHEN in 1495, after a year's absence, Michelangelo found himself back in Florence, he fell on stirring times. The Medici, as we have seen, had fallen. Charles VIII. and his Frenchmen had come and gone from Florence, but still haunted Italy. Savonarola was at the height of his influence, with yet three years to run before the last scene in the Piazza. The fear and hatred of the Medici were stronger than ever, but they wrought no inconvenience to the young sculptor, who for several years had eaten his bread in the Medici Palace. That form of freemasonry which enabled the artists of Italy, even in the most troublous times, to travel where they would, taking service at this court or at that and using their art as the only necessary passport, served Michelangelo as it had served many another. As we read the quiet records of the artists of the past, it is often hard to persuade ourselves, even with the aid of dates, that they were painting their Madonnas in the very places and at the very times wherein crime and politics and revolution were making bloody history. No one seems to have borne any ill-will towards the sculptor for his relations with the Medici. His very first recorded work after his return connects itself with the name of a Medici, Lorenzo di Pier Francesco, who, seeing a 'Sleeping Cupid' which Michelangelo had carved, made the not very happy suggestion, that if Michelangelo would bury it for a time, he, Lorenzo, could send it to Rome and obtain a better price for it as an antique. The 'Cupid' was duly sent to Rome to a dealer named Baldassare Milanese, who presently returned the sum of thirty ducats to Michelangelo as the price which he had obtained, though he had in fact sold it for two hundred ducats to Raffaello Riario,<sup>1</sup> the Cardinal San Giorgio. The Cardinal held himself as a connoisseur, though his patronage of art confined itself, after the fashion prevalent in Rome, mainly to the purchase of antiques. His pride was deeply hurt by the rumour that what he had bought was a modern *contraffazione*. He sent a friend to the studio of Michelangelo, who readily

<sup>1</sup> It was he who built the Palace of the Cancelleria.

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named the 'Cupid' as one of his works, and also consented to go to Rome to identify the marble. Baldassare was made to disgorge his ducats and to take back the statue. In a letter from Michelangelo to Lorenzo di Piero, under cover to Sandro Botticelli, of July 2, 1496, the writer tells how Baldassare in his fury had refused to let Michelangelo have the statue back at any price. It passed presently to Guidobaldo, Duke of Urbino, and when Cesare Borgia, a year later, pounced upon Urbino, it fell with all the other treasure of the Palace into his hands. A letter to Cesare from Isabella d'Este of Mantua, dated June 30, 1503, is extant, in which that lady, whose sympathy for her cousin Elizabeth Gonzaga, Guidobaldo's wife, did not outweigh her zeal as a collector, prays that she may have that 'Cupid.' Cesare had had a fall from his horse and could not look to business, but on July 21 the Marchesa duly received her 'Cupid.' A little later, when the Borgia fabric had fallen and when Guidobaldo came to his own again, Isabella sturdily refused to restore her treasure to her cousin, reminding Guidobaldo that she had had his permission before she wrote to Cesare Borgia, and it remained in her cabinet, where in 1542 it was catalogued among the Gonzaga possessions. There have been many attempts to identify this work. Mariette thought that he had found the 'Cupid' in the Museum of San Marco in Venice. A 'Sleeping Cupid' from Sabionetta was taken to Mantua and accepted as the missing work. Symonds too thought he had found it at Mantua, while Conrad Lange of Leipzig, acting on a hint in Dütsche, indicated it as existing in the Museum of Turin. But all these identifications have been set aside by A. Venturi,<sup>1</sup> who showed some years ago that in 1627 it remained in the collection of Duke Ferdinand of Mantua, from whose possession it passed in 1631 into the hands of the French painter Daniele Nys, who, acting for Charles I. of England, shipped it, on August 4, 1632, with two other marbles from Venice to England. Of its ultimate fate we have no knowledge.

Of Michelangelo's share in the transaction it is necessary to say a few words. As Condivi describes it, it seems at first sight a deliberate fraud on the part of Michelangelo. Such fraud is most unlike anything else that we know of in his whole career. And there are circumstances in the story which justify us in believing that the incident, so far as it touches Michelangelo, was due to no wish to obtain money fraudulently, but was rather a freak of artistic ingenuity on a piece with his boyish exploit when he returned a counterfeit

<sup>1</sup> See Archivio Storico dell' Arte, 1888.



BACCHUS

*Bargello*



X



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST  
("IL GIOVANNINO")

*Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin*

## RETURN TO FLORENCE—FIRST VISIT TO ROME

drawing in place of the original through sheer enjoyment of the skill which was required. It is noticeable that Michelangelo made no concealment to Riario's envoy, and had no hesitation in going with him to Rome, where the Cardinal showed no anger against him, and presently—as we read in the letter of Michelangelo already quoted—gave him a commission. The Cardinal, whose vanity was deeply wounded, would hardly, one thinks, have spared Michelangelo while he rent Baldassare, if he had regarded him as a conscious accomplice in the fraud. For my own part I see in this affair a dangerous and doubtful practical joke, whose triumphant issue was to show that the connoisseur who believed in the antique and the antique only could be deceived. There was not in Michelangelo's share of it any thought of the monetary swindle,<sup>1</sup> though it would have been well that he should have seen how easily his action would lead to it.

Condivi in the course of this story incidentally mentions that Michelangelo had made for Lorenzo di Pier Francesco dei Medici a 'San Giovannino,' or young Saint John. This statue had been lost sight of, and was recovered early in the last century from a Pisan antiquity shop. It became the property of Count Rosselmini Gualandi, with whom it passed as a *Donatello*. It has now passed to the Kaiser Friedrich Museum at Berlin (Plate XI.). To say that it has been universally accepted as the missing 'San Giovannino' would be going too far.<sup>2</sup> It may even be said that those who now accept it have not done so without passing through a period of severe questioning. I may frankly admit that I am one of these last. In spite of certain difficulties I can only conclude that we have in the Berlin statue one of the early productions of the sculptor. The characteristic hands and feet, the fine finish of the marble, the pose of the body, the subtle rendering of the anatomy, which, by the way, is free from all exaggeration, and is very expressive of the supple limbs of boyhood, all seem to belong to the master at this date of his career, shortly before the execution of the 'Bacchus.' On the other hand, the statue is not without a fault. If a position be taken at an angle some six feet from the left side it will be seen that the left arm below the elbow leaves something to be desired.

A commission given by Cardinal Raffaello Riario to Michelangelo has been mentioned. This is stated on the authority of a letter from

<sup>1</sup> The paltry price of thirty ducats, about £14 sterling, which he received for the work, seems to confirm this view.

<sup>2</sup> Wölfflin, Raymond, and others have strongly contested the attribution.

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the sculptor (July 2, 1496), in which he says that he has bought a block of marble 'of life size,' and means to begin work on it on the following Monday. What this work was we do not know, nor do we know how he employed his time until, a year later, Jacopo Gallo, a Roman banker, gave him a commission to produce a statue of 'Bacchus.' This is the work which is now preserved in the Bargello (Plate x.). It represents the wine-god crowned with clusters, and holding near his lips a wine-cup from which he has freely drunk. The narcotic is already sealing the eyes: the limbs are already slackening, the left arm seems to seek support which is not to be found. There is no question of it as a powerful rendering of a drunken stage—no question either of the masterly rendering of the somewhat sensual, well-fed limbs. One may even admit that no other than Michelangelo could have rendered it with such power, and yet, setting aside all distaste for the subject, the statue is one which appeals less to us than almost any work of the master.

To this period in Rome too belongs a 'Cupid' in marble carved on the commission of the same Jacopo Gallo, which Condivi says was in the possession of the latter when he wrote. In the middle of last century a statue came to light in Florence which passed into the Gigli-Campana Collection, and was at a later date purchased with the selected portion of that collection for the Victoria and Albert Museum. Personally, in spite of the verdict of many high authorities, I find myself unable to accept this work (Plate XIII.) as coming from the chisel of Michelangelo. I can only see in it, at best, a copy of a work by him from a less able hand. If, as has been suggested, it is no 'Cupid,' but rather an 'Apollo,' hurling his darts earthwards, then the identification with the 'Cupid' of Jacopo Gallo falls to the ground, and we search the record of Michelangelo's works in vain for anything which corresponds to this statue—unless, indeed, it should be claimed for it that it is the unknown work commenced for the Cardinal San Giorgio. Vigorous and strong in action and not without a certain impressiveness, it fails to convince as a genuine work of the master himself.

It will not have escaped the reader, that up to this time,—we have now reached the year 1498, when Michelangelo was twenty-three years old—we have dealt almost wholly with work done as an exercise under Bertoldo in the manner of the antique or in the style of Donatello, with later work done in deliberate rivalry or imitation of the antique, or else with work done under such cramping circumstances





PIETA

*St. Peter's, Rome*



CUPID

*Victoria and Albert Museum*

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as to prevent him from expressing his own personality or showing the quality of his mind. He has, indeed, proved himself a master fully equipped with all the technics of his art—equipped, indeed, in draughtsmanship as perhaps none before or after him has ever been. But the mighty thought that was in the man—that which makes him to us the true Michelangelo, has not yet shown itself. It was from a Frenchman, the Cardinal Jean de Groslaye of St. Denis,<sup>1</sup> titular Cardinal of Santa Sabina, that the commission came which was to reveal him to us in the 'Pietà' of the Chapel of the Madonna della Pietà or della Febbre in St. Peter's (Plate XII.). Probably that commission was again due to the good offices of his friend Jacopo Gallo, since the contract with the Cardinal stands in his name. It was signed August 27th, 1498, and the date is worth remembering. It was a few months later than the death of Savonarola, by whose preaching Michelangelo had been deeply affected, and for whom he felt the profoundest reverence up to the last days of his life. A year earlier he had in a letter to his brother Buonarroto, expressed his sympathy with the troubles of the Frate, and his wish that he could come to preach in Rome. It was during that last year of Savonarola's trials that Michelangelo was engaged upon his 'Pietà': since documents dating from that time show that the work was already advanced before the final contract was signed. Already the shadows of life had fallen across the spirit of the sculptor. It was a nature which from the very first knew little of the gaiety of life. He had missed his childhood: he had entered upon the stress and earnestness of life at a time when other boys are in the playground. From first to last it was destined to be a career which both by original temperament and by force of circumstance was framed to know little of the laughter of life. We shall fail to understand the spirit of his work if we do not recognise this guiding fact. And when Michelangelo had given to us, in the 'Pietà' of St. Peter's, his vision of the Madonna of Sorrows, he had told us the secret of his own soul. One may take this group which he did when his foot was on the threshold of life, and that other group over the high altar at Florence, which he did when his foot was on the threshold of the grave, as the Alpha and the Omega of his alphabet. All that lies between is written in the letters which unite them.

<sup>1</sup> Both Condivi and Vasari fall into the error of calling Groslaye also Cardinal Rovano, unaware that Cardinal di S. Dionigi and Cardinal Rovano were two distinct personages. The 'Pietà' stood in the old Basilica of St. Peter's, within the Chapel of Sta. Petronilla, and was replaced in the Chapel of San Sisto when the new fabric was completed: being finally transferred to its present position.



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The Mother holds the dead Son upon her knees. She is massive of figure, young of face, her head slightly drooped forwards to the mute form before her. There is no demonstrative grief such as that which the earlier men present when they deal with this subject. Their method, though it often strikes us as exaggerated, is yet upon the whole true to the outward manifestation of Southern sorrow. Donatello shows it so at Padua. But Michelangelo uses no grief-lines to express the mute unutterable sorrow of the Madonna. He seems to be aware of that which older men and women who have suffered know well, that there is a sorrow which can neither seek nor find utterance, which surpasses all human forms of expression—which is just there, a great unspeakable abstraction. The face is grave, quiet, majestically calm. The right hand, strong to support in death, as it was once strong to help in life, is under the arm of her Son; her left arm alone, slightly outstretched, has any gesture in it.

She is young, this Madonna of Sorrows. Michelangelo, when taxed with making her too young, invented, as he so often did, a half-in-earnest reason. 'Know you not that chaste women keep their youth longer than others?' It did well enough, doubtless, to pass away the questioner from deeper things which Michelangelo shrank from discussing. It is indeed noteworthy that though the histories are full of anecdotes of his sayings and replies, we never find that he took any one into partnership as to the deeper thought and meaning of his work. He gave no key to them and left none to us. He was not the man to turn his soul inside out for a Condivi or a Vasari. We may look beyond his reason, to another, perhaps one of which he himself was unconscious. If we go to Palestrina or to Florence and look at either 'Pietà,' done when the old man had lived his life, we find the sense of age over the whole group. For the sympathy which locks up our life with the ideal of the Mother and the Son goes on to every phase of life. Sympathy is always of our own age. We see in that ideal, as we pass from stage to stage, the reality of our own life.

And Michelangelo, who has been called a Pagan, the man of the heathen side of the Renaissance, the man of the worldliest of the Popes, had all his life through this ideal of the Madonna with him, not as an idea to be played with and made graceful and pretty, and not as the young mother of Mino, or Rossellino, full of the joy of life smiling at her child, but with the great shadow of life always over her. This is how life had always seemed to him, with no laughter, no gaiety in it, but only the strength of quiet endurance.

## RETURN TO FLORENCE—FIRST VISIT TO ROME

The group is badly seen, placed too high, and not in a very good light. It suffers, too, from additions, such as a bronze halo to the head of the Christ, and floating bronze cherubs who hold a crown above the Madonna's head,—especially injurious to a work whose feeling depends so much upon the absence of all that can interfere with its one single great thought. Its execution is as faultless as anything which has come to us from the master's hand, and though it is not the technical mastery of the group whose spell we chiefly feel, yet this same perfection does contribute largely to the beauty of the work, and above all, it spares us that criticism of detail which is so apt to destroy the sense of restfulness which we need for the true understanding of a great creation. The anatomy is perfectly rendered, yet without obtrusiveness or exaggeration. The presence of death is expressed in the relaxed and helpless form, but without any sense of the horror which sometimes asserts itself in such a subject, and without any of that over-emphasis which fixes our attention on bones or muscles. The surface of the limbs is brought to that high state of polish which we hardly meet again except in parts of the Medici Tombs, and in the 'Moses.' But no subsequent work of the sculptor more plainly declares him as a consummate master of the technics of his craft.

The 'Pietà' was, as we have seen, commenced in 1497. Michelangelo did not leave Rome till 1501, having spent nearly five years in the city,—but we are without accurate knowledge as to how he occupied those years, or what further work he produced in them. It will be seen that his commissions in those five years had not been numerous. Three of them were due to Jacopo Gallo; two to the Cardinal San Giorgio, and to Lorenzo di Pier Francesco dei Medici—a strange contrast with the overwhelming pressure of work which befell him soon after his return to Florence. The times indeed in Rome were out of joint. We have to remind ourselves that Michelangelo's first knowledge of Rome fell within the days of its deepest degradation under the rule of the Borgias. It is strange to reflect that the year in which the sculptor set chisel to the 'Pietà' was the year of Gaudia's death, when Rome saw the sight of men fishing all along the Ripetta for the Pope's murdered son. And the year before Michelangelo's departure was that which saw the strangling of Lucrezia's husband Alfonso in the Vatican itself under the very eyes of Cesare Borgia. These were sorry years, when Rome on any morning might ring with the news of some fresh horror. There should have been some demand for tombs, since no man, Cardinal or layman, knew how soon he might

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require one. But orders of that sort went in another direction to the workshop of Andrea Bregno, who for years past had held something of a monopoly in that kind—Luigi Capponi, or to men of less calibre. The Pope himself and Cesare had other interests at heart than those of art; and lesser men had other distractions to occupy them. One wonders that Michelangelo endured the atmosphere so long. And yet it is evident that he was not without employment, since in 1500 he had saved money enough to aim at buying a cloth-worker's business for his brothers Buonarroto and Gian Simone.

I am inclined to believe that the marble 'Madonna' of Notre Dame of Bruges (Plate xiv.) should be attributed to the last years of this first Roman sojourn, and not to the early years after his return to Florence. It is true that a letter from Giovanni Balducci bearing date August 4, 1506, alludes to the despatch of the group to Flanders, and this has led to the belief that the work was but recently finished. But there is nothing to show that this was so. It may have been completed in Rome, soon after the 'Pietà,' or possibly commenced in Rome and completed in Florence. Neither Condivi nor Vasari gives a date for it. Both fall into the error of describing it as a bronze, neither having ever seen it, and Condivi's account seems to place it at the time of the 'David.' Both writers give the name of the Flemish merchants who ordered it as Moscheroni—the Italian form of Mouscron. One of the brothers Mouscron lies beneath it in the Church of Notre Dame.

No work, even by Michelangelo, whose creations have so often inspired either love or hate, has been so differently estimated by critics. Many refuse to see in it a work of the master. Others see in it the handiwork of assistants. Others see in it wholly the hand of Michelangelo. And yet others, accepting this latter view, think it unworthy of his genius. I hold it to be entirely from the chisel of the master, and I know no work which better repays long and loving study, or which so little yields up its secret to the hasty transient glance.

The statue is not large, some four feet in height. The Madonna sits with her right hand upon her knee, her left holding that of the Child, who stands between her knees, his body turned to the spectator, but slightly twisted over in one of those involved attitudes which Michelangelo always adopted in his Madonna groups. There is great dignity in the Virgin's face. It is not one of physical beauty as we count it in women. The nose is long, the chin somewhat short, the oval of the face less shapely than we find it in the earlier sculptors. She is of the



## RETURN TO FLORENCE—FIRST VISIT TO ROME

type of the Madonna of the St. Peter's 'Pietà,' with grave foreseeing eyes, majestic, quiet. The eyebrows are a little raised at the inner angle as of one in deep thought, and the eyes have a dreamy, sorrowful look. She seems to have finished her lesson to the Child, to have closed the book, and to be looking out to a far beyond. The whole face, as in the 'Pietà,' is rendered without any straining after the effect of sorrow. Nothing could be finer than the expressive laxity of the right arm as it falls upon the knee, or of the hand which just and only just exerts effort enough to prevent the book from sliding off. The left hand which clasps the hand of the child is even more superbly rendered. It is strong, firm, the Mother's hand, as it locks itself with the little soft fingers—tenderness and loving strength combined. It is in these traits—impossible to a mere helper, impossible to a lesser man, that I see only Michelangelo himself.

The boy's head is perhaps the least satisfactory part of the group. The body is marvellously expressed in its strange attitude—doing just that which a child's body would do if it assumed such a position. But the head and face are less happy. The head is very large—quite rightly for a child of that age, no doubt, but the face is somewhat heavy and old, and the eyes are rather small. At a little distance it comes quite well, but the small size of the statue and the refined cutting invite the spectator to go nearer. The folds of the dress are cut as in the 'Pietà,' but they represent a somewhat lighter material than is usual with Michelangelo. The folds about the breast are cut into finer and flatter shapes, but are yet broadly and expressively treated. There is one curious bunch of folds, a gathering up of the mantle near the Child's head, above the Virgin's left hand. At first sight the purpose of this is not apparent, but seen from a little way down the church it becomes evident that these folds act as a most important dark to throw up the head of the Child. The cutting of the folds, indeed, is everywhere full of purpose. There is one long straight-drawn fold in particular which runs from the Mother's left knee to the sole of the Child's foot. This fold, seen at a distance, indicates and emphasises the slant of the Child's figure. But the device is not introduced without true relation to circumstance. The Child is standing on it, and his weight has drawn it tight, as would really happen. If one retires to the end of the church, one becomes aware of the extraordinary skill which has been employed in the production of light and shade, so that, seen from any distance, the figure of the Child is detached and visible while it still remains in closest union

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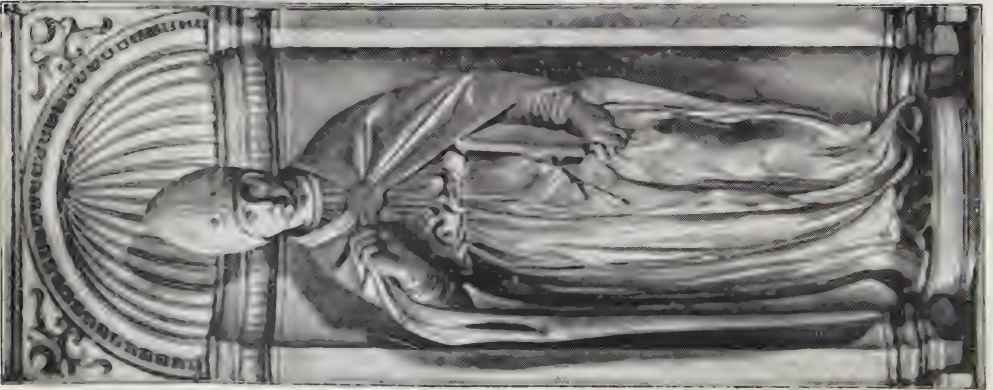
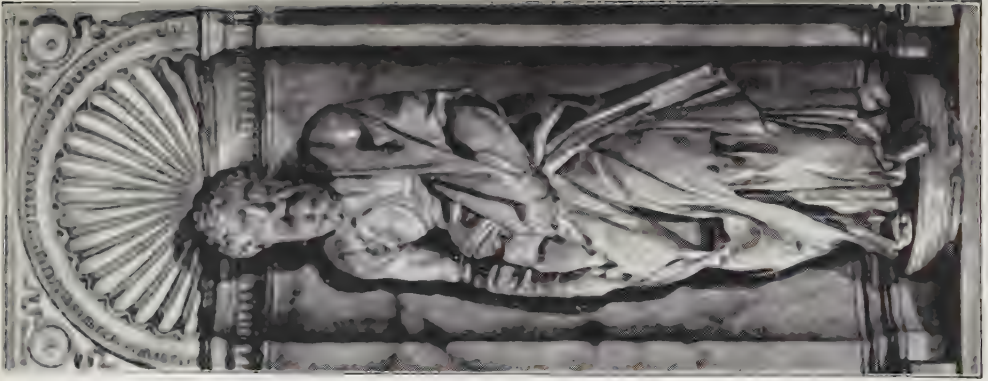
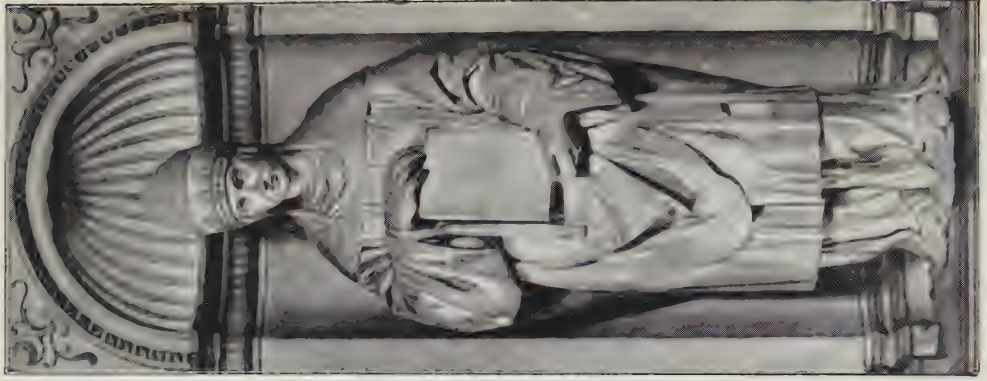
with the Mother. The group possesses a quality which is noticeable in all Michelangelo's finished works. It may be seen to full advantage from near or far. From afar it is shapely, broad, and impressive. From close at hand it is highly finished, and of faultless workmanship. But in neither case does the sense of the craftsmanship employed displace from the mind the higher purpose of the artist.



MADONNA AND CHILD

*Cath.*





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STATUES FROM THE PICCOLOMINI ALTAR

## CHAPTER VI

THE 'DAVID'—THE UFFIZI TONDO—THE 'CARTOON OF PISA'—(1501-5).

**M**ICHELANGELO left Rome for Florence in 1501, being now twenty-six years old. For some time past his father's letters had been a strange mixture of paternal cautions against the dangers of over-work, of over-penuriousness, and above all of washing in any form, with other counsels of health, but had never failed to urge him to return. Whether his father's importunity or his own feelings decided him, it is certain that the return was well made.

He at once found himself full of commissions. The first of these came from the Archbishop of Siena, Francesco Piccolomini, destined to be Pope for a few weeks in 1503 as Pius III. For him Andrea Bregno had sculptured in 1485 the altar *dossale* which we now see in the left aisle of Siena Cathedral—not perhaps altogether to the satisfaction of the Piccolomini family, since the niches for statues had remained unfilled; and the second contract with Michelangelo is amusingly distrustful, almost to peevishness in tone, and contains the odd proviso that the statues are to be better designed and better finished than is customary nowadays with the modern sculptors in Rome. The original contract of 1501 was for fifteen statues, but in the second contract of the same year, Michelangelo was expected to finish the figure of 'S. Francis' which Torrigiano had begun. The sculptor was to receive for the fifteen statues, of about four feet high, the sum of five hundred broad ducats, rather over sixteen pounds apiece in current value, weight for weight. We must return to this contract presently, but meanwhile the young sculptor received in August of that same year a commission, which for the time doubtless set aside all others. There had lain in the Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore, for thirty-five years, a colossal block of marble which an ineffective sculptor had mutilated in vainly trying to block out a statue. This sculptor was neither Simone Ferrucci da Fiesole, as Vasari says, nor yet Agostino di Duccio, as is generally believed, but rather, as the documents of the

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Opera show, one Bartolommeo di Pietro, called Baccellino,<sup>1</sup>—whose chisels had ploughed so deep that their scoring may be seen to this day upon the back of the statue, since Michelangelo feared to go deeper. In the summer of 1501 the *operai* decided to make use of the block, and—though Andrea Sansovino had begged it—on August 16th of that year the consuls of the *Arte della Lana* and the *operai* of Sta. Maria assigned it to Michelangelo, who was within two years to complete a statue of 'David' for which he was to receive four hundred ducats—the amount tells out at about fifty-six shillings a month. A note, written on the margin of the contract, tells us that the said Michelangelo began to work and to sculpture the said 'Giant' (for so it was called from the first) on September 13th, a Monday, at early morning—though he had before, with one or two blows of his chisel, removed a certain mass from the breast. The four weeks had sufficed him to decide the form of his statue, and perhaps to prepare the little wax models which are to-day in the Casa Buonarroti, and which indicate, though not accurately, the sculptor's intentions. The statue was finished in January 1504, two months late. Then on the 25th of January there met a committee to decide its position. As we read the names of this committee, which include those of Lionardo da Vinci, Perugino, Lorenzo di Credi, Piero di Cosimo, Filippino Lippi, Sandro Botticelli, Cosimo Rosselli, the brothers Sangallo, Andrea Sansovino, Cronaca, Andrea della Robbia, and others who, though less notable, are yet names of account in Art, the mere record seems to inspire a kind of reverence. Never before or since has such a committee been brought together to do honour to the work of a young artist. It was possible only to Florence, and to Florence in that day.

Three positions were in question for the statue. The centre of the courtyard of the Palazzo Vecchio, where Verrocchio's little bronze 'David' then stood; the stone platform (*Ringhiera*) in front of the Palace, where of late years Donatello's 'Judith' had been placed; and the position under the Loggia dei Lanzi where the 'Judith' stands to-day. A delicious Florentine flavour is added to the discussion by the opening speech of the Herald of the Palace, who, ignoring the Loggia, desires that the new statue should either displace the 'Judith' because he objects to the presentment of a woman killing a man, thinks it unlucky, and says that since it was there they have gone from bad to worse and

<sup>1</sup> See Milanese, Vasari's *Lives*, 1906. It is strange that in the contract the block is distinctly said to have been '*male abbozzatum per Augustinum grande de Florentiâ.*'





DAVID

*Accademia, Florence*

X



ST. MATTHEW

*Accademia, Florence*

## THE DAVID

lost Pisa; or else let it displace Verrocchio's 'David,' whose left leg is badly done, but, in preference, away with the 'Judith.' The herald having spoken, the artists followed. Lionardo da Vinci, Giuliano Sangallo, and Piero di Cosimo favoured the Loggia. Botticelli, Cosimo Rosselli, and Giovanni delle Corniole preferred the site in front of the Palace; while Filippino Lippi and several of the others thought that the sculptor himself would be the best judge. Michelangelo preferring the last-named site, the 'Judith' migrated to her present modest position in the Loggia, and the 'Giant,' in May following, performed its four days' journey—not without perils from street boys and others, possibly of the Medici faction (for the statue was known to have a political signification), who revived the Florentine speciality of stone-throwing—from the Opera del Duomo to its place on the Ringhiera to the left of the great entrance. Here, with one or two minor vicissitudes, it stood till the year 1873, when on the report of a commission of Florentine sculptors, who predicted injury from the weather, the 'Giant' once more traversed the streets of Florence to its present home in the Accademia. Michelangelo and that ancient Florentine committee may well have stirred in their graves.

It is to be feared that the easy assent which was given to this removal was due in part to the modern desire to sweep together all works of art into museums and galleries. Those who knew it in its old position will agree with me that no statue could well have suffered more by such a change. Apart from the loss of the significance of the statue in its old position—it was meant to be typical of the firm front of Florence against tyranny and wrong—the colossal size of the statue causes it, even in the roomy and liberal imprisonment provided for it, to seem cabined and confined. 'He who has worked it,' said one of the old committee of 1504, 'knows better than any one else what is wanted for the air and manner of the figure.' The cold light and dreary background in which the 'David' stands at the head of the long rows of interesting but chilly plaster-casts, is a sorry exchange for the full daylight and warm setting of the position which Michelangelo chose for it.<sup>1</sup>

The statue (Plate XVI.), which is often found to repel the spectator at the first glance, can be appreciated only when we have fully grasped the idea which dominates the whole conception. There is nothing here in common with Verrocchio's boy of some fourteen summers, ruddy and of

<sup>1</sup> It is also necessary to warn the reader that few works suffer more by reproduction, either in cast or in photograph. The pedestal is by Cronaca and Antonio Sangallo.



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a fair countenance, his face radiant with boyish delight at the good shot that he has just made; nothing in common with Donatello's beautiful pensive shepherd boy of the Campagna, who stands, spirit and limbs alike relaxed after his hour of stress. This 'David' stands for the type of indomitable heroic resistance to unseen but well-felt forces of evil. He is of the age of strength, the boy just passing into the man, every muscle firm and clear in the healthy frame, the type of well-prepared manhood. The figure is not yet tense for the great effort. The stone is in the right hand, but the sling hangs loose as yet in the left—it is noticeable that Michelangelo has made him left-handed, mindful perhaps of those left-handed slingers of Israel who could sling to a hairsbreadth. Another minute and the stone will be in its place. The young man stands looking towards his enemy. He has knit his brows; the eyes beneath turn towards him with a look of scorn. The mouth is firmly set, and has the same air of contempt upon the lips. There is strength everywhere, strength of muscle, strength of purpose, strength of fearless faith. This was the ideal that Michelangelo set himself to present, and 'knowing the air and meaning' of his statue, he did well to set such an ideal in the foreground of the Public Palace.

As the David stood in that position, beneath the vast wall of the Signoria, the colossal proportions did not so force themselves upon the mind, and so great an effort was not needed to bring him back to the scale of the narrative. There are certain points which we notice in the statue which are doubtless partly, though they cannot be entirely, due to the cramped conditions under which the sculptor had to extract his forms from the injured block—conditions so triumphantly surmounted, however, on the whole, that those who knew them described the work as the bringing of a dead man to life. But the exaggerated size of the hands, otherwise magnificently modelled, and the bulkiness of the arms and shoulder in comparison to the torso, can hardly be due to this cause, and must be put down to a preference which now begins to show itself through all the work of the master. The head, too, is over-massive for the torso beneath. That same torso is superb in its modelling, whether we view it from the back or from the front, and so, too, the easy and natural but firmly planted legs. No one would describe the statue as pleasing or engaging—it was not meant primarily to be that. But no one who has given time enough to its study can fail to become conscious of the commanding force of its conception and the masterly perfection of its workmanship.

## PICCOLOMINI STATUES

Here it will be convenient to mention that while the marble 'David' was in progress, the Signoria of the Republic commissioned the sculptor to execute a smaller 'David' in bronze, which they destined as a present to the Lord of Nemours, Maréchal de Gié, then in great favour with the King of France. The work hung fire,—Michelangelo never took very kindly to bronze—so much so, that before it was completed the Maréchal was under a cloud, and the Republic thought no shame to utilise their 'David' as a present to a fresh favourite, the Treasurer Robertet, to whose château at Blois it was accordingly sent in 1508, and being, by the value of its metal, unsuited to troublous times, has long since taken some other form, and ceased to trouble the catalogues of art.

Meanwhile, Michelangelo had also on his hands the Piccolomini commission for the fifteen statues at some sixteen pounds apiece. No more than five of these, including the 'San Francesco' begun by Torrigiano, ever got finished. We learn that these five were completed in 1504, and were probably delivered at Siena then or soon after. They represent 'St. Peter,' 'St. Paul,' 'St. Pius,' and 'St. Gregory' (Plate xv.), and, as we have seen, they fill the niches in the great Piccolomini altar which, some twenty years before, Andrea Bregno had executed for the Cardinal Francesco. To the necessity of conforming as far as possible to the somewhat prosaic art of Bregno we may partly attribute the fact that these statues, which were in Michelangelo's studio at the same time as his 'David,' are amongst the dullest and least personal of his works. But still more we may seek the reason in the evident and liberal assistance of workshop craftsmen. It is clear that Michelangelo was in these years, from 1501 to 1504, over-weighted with commissions. In April of 1503 he had, in spite of his heavy responsibilities, accepted a commission from the *operai* of Sta. Maria del Fiore to execute within twelve years twelve statues of 'Apostles' for the Duomo, for which he was to receive payment at the rate of two large ducats (a little over nineteen shillings) a month for the twelve years. He was to make journeys to Carrara, receiving his expenses for himself and an assistant, and also the cost of the marble. A studio was built for him by Cronaca in the Borgo Pinti. But this incredible contract was never carried out. One is indeed amazed that either side should ever have contemplated it. One dimly blocked-out figure for a 'St. Matthew' (Plate xvii.), the first of those grand shadows which Michelangelo left behind him, the idea 'half-liberated from the marble,' as the inscription says, is to be seen to-day in the Accademia, ✓

## MICHELANGELO

the only visible outcome of the contract. The sculptor during these years had undertaken no less than thirty-seven statues or reliefs; and that for far less payment than a modern sculptor often receives for a single life-size statue.

We are apt to think of Michelangelo as one whose footsteps were for ever dogged by some ill-fate—tragedies of the tomb, to use Condivi's theatrical term—caprice of Pope or cardinal, jealousy of rivals which cut short the splendour of his achievements. It would be nearer the truth to say that the magnitude of his own conceptions, and the boundless energy of his own nature, were for ever outrunning all considerations of time and physical possibility. Vast as was the achievement of that long lifetime, it was as nothing compared to the mighty dreams which filled his mind, and to the mighty undertakings to which he actually pledged himself. As for the question of payment, he never learned or seemed to desire to learn how to reduce his Art to terms of money. He was at times in his life what he called in his letters wealthy—wealthy enough to give it nearly all away to his helpless brothers or to his nephews. But his 'wealth,' if we examine it, was due to the fact that he had reduced his bodily wants to a minimum, and that he spent nothing on himself, living alone with one servant, and not always that, to look after studio and living-room. He surrounded himself with none of the most ordinary comforts of life. The luxurious surroundings of the Medici days had left no longings behind them for him. From first to last he resisted all attempts on the part of his relations to make his manner of life less solitary and less bare of all amenity. Of all the artists of whom we have records, no man ever lived so completely in and for his art, no man so completely freed himself from all the chains that social allurements are apt to weave for the artist.

When, then, we find him presently in his dealings with Agnolo Doni, who had given him a commission for a picture, wrathfully exacting more than twice the price which he usually asked because Doni had foolishly tried to cheapen him,<sup>1</sup> we may see in this only a sign of the impatient pride which was always a part of the man. The incident has other interest too for us, since it brings us into contact with the one easel picture by the master which is unquestioned and unquestionable, namely, the tondo of the 'Holy Family,' now in the Uffizi (Plate XVIII.). The picture, which is sometimes described

<sup>1</sup> The reader will remember a somewhat similar action on the part of Donatello when he hurled his bust into the Piazza sooner than be beaten down, and of the unhappy Torrigiano when he smote his statue of the 'Madonna' into fragments to his own undoing.





HOLY FAMILY

*Uffizi*



*L.P., PhD, is a Senior Lecturer in Leadership*

## UFFIZI HOLY FAMILY

as being in *tempera*, was carefully examined at close quarters by Heath Wilson, who states that it is undoubtedly in oil,<sup>1</sup> and it is a solitary instance in the artist's career of work carried out in that medium for which he later in life professed his contempt in the well-known saying that 'oil painting was an art for children,' a contempt which perhaps dates back to his 'prentice days in the workshop of Ghirlandaio. The tondo is, even without this special interest, in many ways remarkable. The painter is here first and foremost the sculptor, or say rather the modeller—for the picture is modelled with the brush, colour and tone little regarded, values even less reckoned with, and the whole thought of as if it had been a bas-relief, with reference to the incidence of light and shade as it would fall upon a surface of marble, and as if the figures which it contains were subject to the same laws of higher and lower projection from the ground of the relief. The shadows, as indeed a good photograph will tell us, fall with the same forms and severity as they would in a work of sculpture. The lights are in consequence heavily loaded up to actual whiteness, and the scale of colour therefore is hard and cold. Of atmosphere there is little or none, the background figures receding indeed but by the laws of relief. Colour, in the sense in which we have learned to look for it from the schools of the great colourists, is of necessity not here. It is of the nature of a finely modelled drawing to which colour has been applied. As a composition, that is to say the right filling by figures of the space enclosed by the frame, nothing could be finer. It is when we come to the consideration of the group as an ideal of the scene and the persons represented that estimates will vary most. The figure of the Virgin is massive and homely—a woman of the people. There is none of the fascinating grace that the painters of his day and of the day just preceding it would have given us. The one ideal which is there, and which lives and expresses itself through all the strength of the massive forms, is the Mother's love. Nothing could be more tender than the feeling which is expressed in the figure of the Virgin as she holds the Child up to Joseph. Denying himself all captivating graces and seeking to present only one single motive, Michelangelo has produced a picture which will stand one test, and that amongst the highest that can be applied to a picture—you cannot forget it when once you have become really acquainted with it.

<sup>1</sup> Signor P. Neroni Ferri, the Director of the Uffizi, has kindly confirmed this fact.



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The feature, however, of the picture which has most challenged criticism and most created dislike, is the introduction of a row of nude figures in the background. This has been condemned as a proof of Michelangelo's pagan predilections, or at least of an irreverent attitude of thought. One or two writers have sought a defence by explaining the figures as symbolical, and one at least interprets them as prophets. I cannot believe in any such interpretation, any more than I can believe that they illustrate any irreverence in the mind of Michelangelo. We shall fail wholly to understand his art if we fail to recognise the fact that by this time, and with more absolute entirety as years went on, the nude form—the human form, that is, as God bestowed it upon man—had become to him his language, as much the symbol of his thought as words to a poet or the notes of music to a musician. To him there had long ceased to be any thought of irreverence in the presentation of the nude human form. We shall have to notice at a later stage how all natural forms have disappeared from his art, leaving him alone with the form of man as an expression of all moral, physical, or spiritual fact. There is no place any longer—indeed there never has been much from the beginning—for shapes of bird or beast, of tree or flower, of landscape or the beauty of earth. His mind had, as it were, become atrophied to all interests save those which were to be seen through the form and the spirit of Man.

When therefore he comes, in carrying out his composition, to need the presence of certain accessory figures, it comes as naturally to him and is as little irreverent to place them there in nude form, as it had been to a Perugino to figure there his fluttering angels, or to Benozzo Gozzoli, or Botticelli, or Ghirlandaio, to fill their vacant spaces with figures clad in the princely braveries and the dignified draperies of the modern Florentine. He saw man nobly nude where they had seen him nobly clad. I do not for a moment deny also his sheer delight as an artist in the rendering of the nude human form: any more than one need deny to those others their artist's delight, in the rendering of gorgeous pageantries. But the one is in essence no more pagan, no more irreverent, than the other. It was, however, though not quite an innovation, yet considering the influence of the man who did it, practically a departure, which in the hands of lesser men and meaner thinkers was destined to produce evil fruits in the treatment of sacred art.



HOLY FAMILY

*Bargello*





## MARBLE TONDI

To this period, too, belong two other tondi, reliefs in marble, of which one, and that the finer, remains in the collection of the Bargello, begun, but never completed, for Bartolommeo Pitti, while the other, also unfinished, belongs to the Diploma Gallery of the Royal Academy of London. The motive of the Bargello group (Plate xx.) is that which appears in the Bruges 'Madonna' and also in the Doni picture,—the Mother has been giving the Child a reading-lesson. Here the Child is tired, and leans his elbow over the open book upon her knee. The Virgin, too, turns her head and looks dreamily out with the same calm sad gaze which is typical of all Michelangelo's sculptured Madonnas. Nothing more full of meaning and of pathos has come to us from his hand, and nothing of its haunting beauty is lost to it because the chisel-marks of the master are still upon it, a deeply interesting link to us, as we look at them, with the personality of the man who wrought it four hundred years ago. One can see no reason why Michelangelo did not give to this not very large tondo the day or two of work which would, as we say, have 'finished it,' except that he was more and more coming to find himself unable, when he had once expressed all that there was to express, to bring himself to add a 'finish' which would express no more. The tondo of the Diploma Gallery (Plate xix.), in like manner, is left in many parts in the rough, but loses nothing of its motive and expression thereby. The Child, half-frightened by the bird which St. John holds out to him, shrinks for shelter to his mother's lap. The movement expressed in the bodies of the two children, of which the St. John is left with the surface still rough, is very masterly. The face of the Madonna alone seems to fall short of the beauty of the Bargello tondo.

These two works no doubt were still in the studio and formed part of those thirty-seven statues and reliefs, of which the greater portion were still upon the sculptor's books and conscience, when a summons from Pope Julius the Second in 1505 took him once more to Rome. But in the last months of the year before this occurred his hands had been full with a commission which was destined never to reach completion, though even in its preliminary stage it raised the artist's name higher than perhaps anything which he had hitherto accomplished, even than the 'David' itself. To Lionardo da Vinci had been assigned, in 1503, the decoration of a wall in the Sala Grande del Consiglio, where the Municipal Council of Florence held its meetings.

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The subject which he chose was the 'Battle of Anghiari,'<sup>1</sup> where in 1440 the Florentines, by their victory over the condottiere Piccinino, had saved the Republic from the hands of Filippo Maria Visconti. This work was, by the common consent of those who saw it, a masterpiece even of that master. When therefore, at the instance of the Gonfaloniere Pietro Soderini, who had always been foremost in recognising the powers of his young fellow-citizen, the Council decided to entrust the other wall to Michelangelo, they were paying to Michelangelo the highest honour which was in their power. An empty room was given to him in the Hospital of the dyers in Sant' Onofrio, in what is now the Via Guelfa. Here in October 1504 Michelangelo began his famous cartoon. He worked at it till the early days of January 1505. Then came his summons by the Pope, and late in the summer of 1506, after his flight from Rome, a month or two perhaps of renewed work upon the cartoon, which seems to have brought it to completion. The actual wall painting was never executed. The cartoon remained at Sant' Onofrio, and became to the younger generation of artists during its short existence as much the model of style as the works of Masaccio and Filippo Lippi had been to the older men. Nothing is more significant of the changed direction which Michelangelo's influence was destined to give to Italian art—not, alas, for the better, since his forms could be emptily and vulgarly travestied, but his technical mastery and his powers of thought could not—than the fact that the chapel of the Carmine was now deserted for the dyers' hall of Sant' Onofrio. It was removed to an upper chamber of the Casa Medici, and there, subjected to rough handling, and eventually torn or cut into fragments, it perished after an existence of not more than six or seven years. But for what reason this was done, by whom, and whether by malice or folly, is uncertain. Vasari in his life of Baccio Bandinelli circumstantially lays the crime to that enemy of himself and Michelangelo. He states that after the return of the Medici, when the Casa Medici was under repair, Bandinelli made himself a false key, and secretly entering the chamber cut the cartoon to pieces. But Vasari's statements about Bandinelli may not be trusted, and he seems to have forgotten that in his life of Michelangelo he had merely said that the cartoon had

<sup>1</sup> The picture, executed, as it would seem, in some medium akin to the wax encaustic of the ancients, perished in a very short time. It was replaced by the miserable productions of Giorgio Vasari which we see to-day.

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been destroyed by careless artists through lack of supervision during the illness of Giuliano. Moreover, Benvenuto Cellini, who never missed the opportunity of a stab at Bandinelli, says no word upon the point, and Condivi declares that he does not know what became of it, but that Michelangelo had left it in the Sala del Papa at Santa Maria Novella.<sup>1</sup> Neither Vasari nor Condivi ever saw it, but Benvenuto Cellini, who could be a sound critic when his own work was not in question, and who himself had copied it, after speaking in warm admiration of the work of Lionardo (whose figures were all draped), declares that Michelangelo never again rose to half that same height of power even in the vault of the Sistine chapel.

I do not propose to examine at any length the details of a work which never can be seen by us. It has been exhaustively treated by many of the best authorities on Michelangelo. The subject which he chose was a well-known incident in the war between Florence and Pisa when the English condottiere, Sir John Hawkwood—whose portrait on horseback by Paolo Uccello is to be seen in the Duomo of Florence—fell upon a body of Florentine soldiers who were bathing in the Arno. The incident from a national point of view had hardly the intrinsic interest which should justify its appearance on the walls of the great Council. It was chosen by Michelangelo for the opportunity which it gave for the drawing of the nude form. A copy in monochrome—perhaps that which Aristotele da Sangallo executed—exists at Holkham Hall, and portions have been engraved, in very free translation, by Marcantonio Raimondi, Antonio Veneziano, Schiavonetti, and others. A sketch by Daniele da Volterra reproduces a small portion, and original drawings by the master himself survive in the collections of Europe, especially one at Vienna which, very slight in execution, seems to contain the first thought for many of the attitudes. More accessible to the English reader is a fine drawing in the British Museum of the naked man, much foreshortened, who is reaching down into the stream, and the copy of the cartoon at Holkham Hall already mentioned. But for the present we must leave the cartoon in the hall of the Hospital of Sant' Onofrio

<sup>1</sup> There is confusion on this point among the authorities. Vasari, as we have seen, places its ultimate resting-place in the Casa Medici, Condivi in the Sala del Papa. Benvenuto Cellini says that one cartoon was in the Casa Medici, and one in the Sala del Papa, but he does not say which was which.

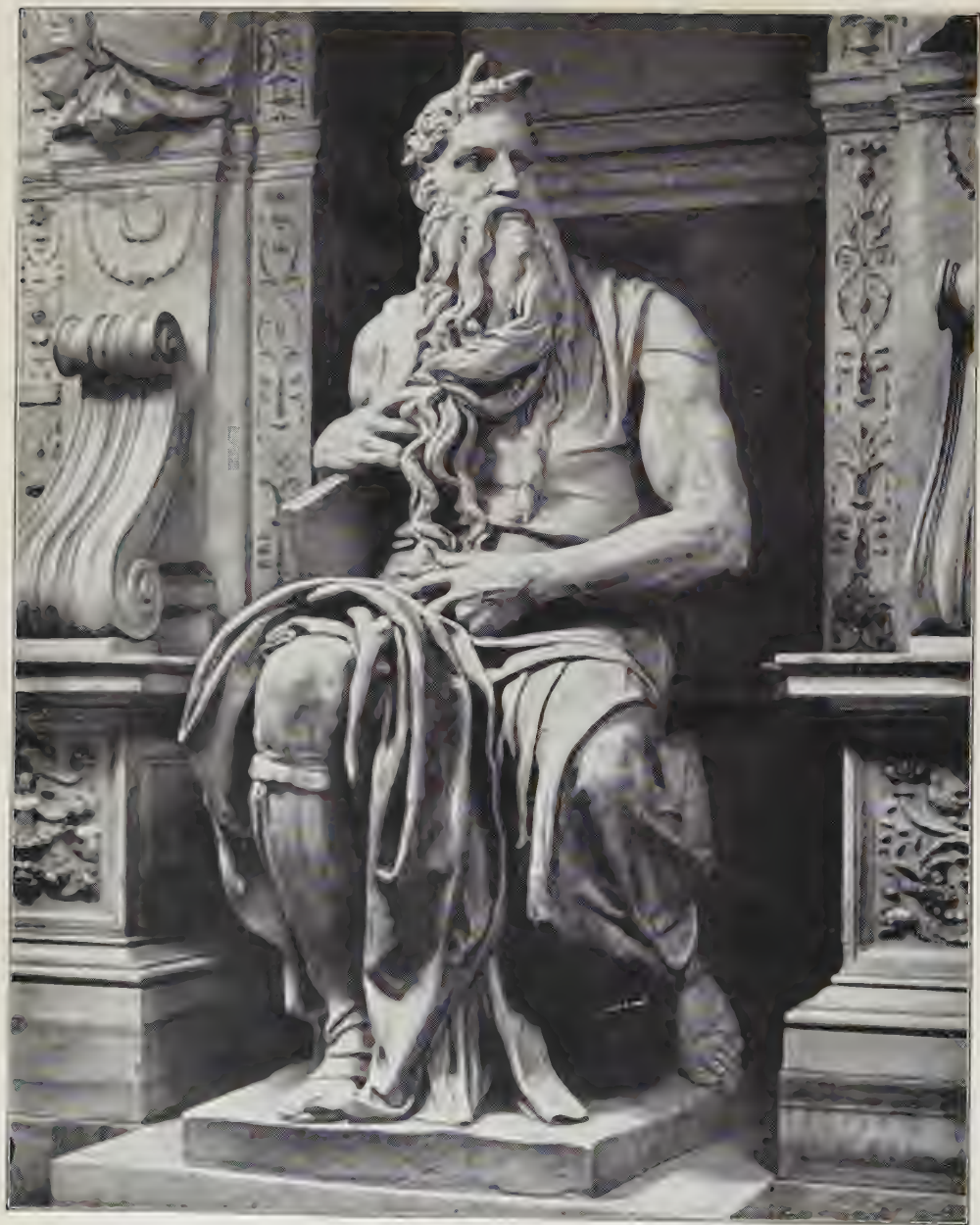


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and accompany Michelangelo, with his hundred gold crowns for journey-money, on his second visit to Rome, which was presently to bear fruit in the mighty achievements of his life, the Tomb of Julius, the Vault of the Sistine, and indirectly, as a far-off crowning piece, the Dome of St. Peter's.



SKETCH FOR THE TOMB OF JULIUS II  
(COPY BY JACOPO SACCHETTI)



MOSÉS  
(FROM THE TOMB OF JULIUS II)

*S. Pietro in Vincoli, R.*



## CHAPTER VII

### THE FIRST DESIGN FOR THE TOMB OF JULIUS (1505)—THE HISTORY OF THE TOMB

WHEN in the January of 1505 Michelangelo once more set foot in Rome, the air was easier to breathe. The age of terror under the Borgias had passed and left little behind it save its unsavoury memories. Pius III.—he who had contracted for statues ‘better done than they are generally done nowadays in Rome’—had, after twenty-six days of the Papacy, given place to Giuliano della Rovere, nephew of Sixtus IV., who took the name of Julius the Second. A work on Art is not the place in which to discuss the moral or religious aspects of the Papacy in those days. We are concerned with the personality of this Pope or that merely as it affected the art and the life of Michelangelo. The remarkable man who now sat in the chair of St. Peter had not a few points of character in common with the artist. Never so much at home as when he sat his horse at the head of his troops, he was perhaps more fitted by nature to lead an army than to head a Church. But his ideas, whether in war or peace, were large and ambitious, and though the feverish days of his manhood, which he had spent with his life always in his hand in peril of the Borgias, had left him little room for the study of art or letters, he yet saw in both, as his uncle had seen before him, forces which should be used to enhance the glory of the Papacy. Not that his patronage of art or letters was all self-interest. He had, for art at any rate, and perhaps for letters, a sincere admiration, but he knew his own limitations. ‘A book in my hand!’ he cried to Michelangelo when his statue was in question—‘No, not a book, but a sword—I have little of book-learning.’ In Michelangelo no doubt he found a man after his own heart, one who could understand and also originate great schemes. Each was full of energy, impetuous, impatient, large of view, ambitious of achievement. Each rose to the full height of his powers and showed at his best in the presence of great undertakings. And each, too, showed the same tendency to turn the

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possible into the impossible by making their undertakings embrace too vast a field.

Vasari and Condivi both assert that Julius sent for the artist with no fixed scheme in his head for his employment, and that he wasted several months before he finally decided upon his own tomb, to be placed in the Basilica of St. Peter. The fact that in less than three months from his arrival in Rome, Michelangelo, with two assistants, was on his way to Carrara ready to choose, and even to block out in some cases, the marbles for the tomb, falsifies once more, as is so often the case, the evidence of these writers. It is clear that Julius either had already in his mind the tomb, or that he very rapidly formed his decision,—equally clear that Michelangelo shaped his design with extraordinary speed and received the Pope's assent. There is no trait which more marks the man than the completeness and rapidity with which an idea once suggested to him sprang into realisation—as Athena from the brain of Zeus—fully armed and equipped for action. We find it so with the David, with the Medici Tombs, with the Sistine Vault, with the Dome itself. Very characteristic, too, of the man is the sudden burst of energetic action which follows on the shaping of the idea. He is away, before his design can have been much over a month old, to Carrara,—spends eight months there seeing his blocks quarried,—a fact which shows that his design must have taken clear and final shape even to measurements,—blocks out one or two of them on the spot, visits Lavagna to make contracts for their transport to Rome, and finally, piling as usual idea upon idea and project upon project, half purposes to shape one of the cliffs of Carrara into a marble figure, as the Greek sculptor in the days of Alexander had thought to do with Mount Athos. Then he is back in Rome seeing to the transfer of his marbles from the Marmorata on the Ripa Grande to the workshop near the Vatican, and is soon at work with mallet and chisel on the ill-fated monument, for the masses of marble destined for St. Peter's never got nearer to the church, and some of them never nearer to their shaping, than when they stood piled about the workshop in the Borgo St. Angelo.

It will be most convenient, though it violates chronological order, to follow the history of the Tomb of Julius to its end. Let us begin by quoting the description of Condivi. 'The tomb was intended to have four faces, two of eighteen braccia (thirty-four feet six) to form the sides, two of twelve braccia (twenty-three feet) for the two ends, the whole forming an oblong. The exterior was adorned with separate



SLAVE  
(FROM THE TOMB OF JULIUS II)

*Louvre*





SLAVE  
(FROM THE TOMB OF JULIUS II)

*Louvre*

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niches which were to receive each a statue: between each pair of niches there were terminal figures: below, a sort of entablature sustained by plinths rising from the ground, projecting, and supporting statues loaded with bonds like prisoners. They represented the liberal Arts, such as Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture, each with its attributes in such sort that it was easy to recognise them. The meaning of the allegory was also easy to understand. As the Pope himself, so all these forces were prisoners of Death; for the Arts would never have found one who was better disposed to favour and to encourage them. Above the statues ran a cornice which united all the portions of the work. On the plane were four great statues: one of them, the "Moses," is seen to-day in the church of San Pietro in Vincoli: it will be spoken of in its place. The work ended in a platform on which two angels supported a sarcophagus: one of the angels had a smiling face, as if rejoicing to see the soul of the Pope received in the rank of happy spirits; the other was weeping at the thought that the world was deprived of so great a man. By one of the extremities, on one of the short sides, you penetrated to the interior of the tomb: there in the middle of a small chamber, in form of a temple, was a marble sarcophagus destined to receive the body of the Pope. The whole was worked with a marvellous art.<sup>1</sup> Lastly the monument was to contain more than forty statues, without counting the scenes of low relief in bronze, all appropriate to the subject, which were to reproduce the feats of the great pontificate.' So far Condivi, differing from Vasari in these respects, that the latter describes the figures about the chest not as angels, but as 'Heaven who smiling bore a bier upon the shoulder, and Cybele, Goddess of the Earth, who seemed to mourn that she remained on the world robbed of all worth by the death of this man.' He describes the four great statues, speaking of them as if they were equal in size and as if they corresponded to one another, as Active and Contemplative Life, Moses and St. Paul. The tomb was to stand apart from wall or pillar in St. Peter's so as to allow free passage all round it.

We may perhaps accept with reasonable confidence the statements of either of these writers on the subject of measurements, architectural details, and the general disposition of the parts of the monument. But we shall be within our rights in reserving our judgment as to the

<sup>1</sup> Since little of it all came into existence, the value of Condivi's account is at this point subject to somewhat large discount. He speaks of what it might have been as though it had been. So too Vasari.

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inner meanings which underlay the sculpture of this great tomb. One may doubt whether Michelangelo, whom we know to have been self-contained almost to secretiveness about his work, so that he admitted to the secret chambers of his soul not even his closest friends, and not even those who had the best right to claim the privilege, would have imparted to this very unimaginative pair of admirers the inmost workings of his mind. It must be remembered also, both in the case of the Julius and the Medici tombs, that Condivi's and Vasari's accounts were published many years after both projects had been laid aside by Michelangelo, when both had become bitter memories to him, and when he had so lost interest in them that no persuasions could induce him to resume them. Giorgio Vasari was not born when the first design was framed for the tomb of Julius. He was hardly more than a child when the Medici tombs were in making. Condivi, born in 1525,<sup>1</sup> was a still younger man. To neither of them could these designs have been made known till they had become a faint and far-off echo of the first great conception. When we read in Vasari that the *prigioni*, the bound figures with which the tomb was to be surrounded, were captured provinces, we are reminded that in 1505 Julius had not yet set out upon his career of conquest, and sanguine and masterful of spirit though he was, he knew enough of the uncertainties of life to abstain from visibly challenging fate upon his tomb. So too, when we read in Condivi that these same prisoners were the liberal Arts bound and chained by the loss of Julius, we may reserve to ourselves the doubt whether it follows that Condivi should have been better informed of the secrets of Michelangelo's thought.

No complete design of the monument survives. The fragmentary drawings which exist in various collections, though by no means all proceeding from the master's hand, are, even as copies by pupils, of a certain value as evidence of varying phases through which the details of the design were passing in the mind of the sculptor before they took satisfactory shape—trial sketches, first thoughts thrown off on paper. The best known of these is a drawing at Berlin<sup>2</sup> (Plate XXI.), often reproduced, which, as a fair general plan of the architecture, corresponds roughly with Condivi's account. But the niches are filled

<sup>1</sup> The statement in the second edition of Condivi's life of Michelangelo, 1746, is clearly erroneous. It describes Condivi as dying at the age of eighty-nine in 1564, having outlived his master by ten years. But the master himself died in 1564—which would make master and pupil of one age. See Milanese's commentary to Vasari, 1906.

<sup>2</sup> A copy by Jacopo Sacchetti.



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by two winged figures standing victoriously over two prostrate forms. The 'prisoners,' on a higher level, stand as described on plinths on either side of each niche, and behind them are visible the heads of the terminal figures. On the platform we see the marble chest with *putti* on either side—but we look in vain for Heaven and Earth. Large statues rest on the platform and explain to us that their original position was to have been here, and not on the ground level as we now see it. The part elevation suggested in this drawing gives us one of the short ends only. Yet on it are visible sixteen statues, which suggests that Condivi's and Vasari's estimate of forty for the whole tomb is likely to be well within the mark. But as we have said, it is not safe to insist on an argument derived from these passing phases of the design.

Michelangelo was at work upon the great task with all the ardour of his character—for none, as Clement the Seventh said later of him, could work as he could when he willed—still inspired and fired by the presence with him of his first mighty conception: when suddenly the Pope changed his mind, and from that moment the great design in its entirety was doomed. The 'Tragedy of the Tomb,' as Condivi calls it, had begun—tragedy undoubtedly in some sort for Michelangelo, since it hung over the best years of his life, and with its attendant worries and disappointments often seemed to paralyse his energies—he says so himself—for months at a time. Vasari attributes the Pope's sudden coolness to the jealous schemings of Bramante. It is true that there was no love between the artists. Michelangelo sincerely admired Bramante's plan for St. Peter's, and freely said so. But Bramante had proceeded in the spirit of the modern restorer, and had wrought needless havoc with the work of the older men, and Michelangelo as freely expressed his wrath at these proceedings. He criticised with equal vigour the structural weakness of Bramante's work. No doubt there was ill-feeling between them; but we need not seek the cause of the Pope's change of mind in that, nor yet in the fact that some one had told him it was unlucky to build one's tomb in one's lifetime—a curious comment on the frequency with which in that day the formula 'sibi vivo' appears on the tomb of the cardinals, who had feared, it is said, the seizure of their wealth—the rough and ready death-duty of the day—by the Papal treasury at their death. The true reason lay rather in the fact that the mind of Julius was already absorbed in his schemes of conquest, even if the other reasons quoted contributed in any measure to the result. Michelangelo was

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soon able to perceive the change. He was unable to obtain any money from the Pope, who personally acted as paymaster for the expenses of the Tomb; and presently, being denied admission to his presence, made up his mind on the spot. Leaving orders for the sale of his studio effects, he took horse within a few hours<sup>1</sup> and pushed forward till he had placed one hundred and thirty miles between himself and Julius. At Poggibonsi he found himself safe on Tuscan soil, and the Papal couriers who overtook him there brought back the reply that he would never return and was now free from all obligations to the Pope. Truly Julius had found his match. He sent letter after letter to the Signoria of Florence: in vain. Piero Soderini, not perhaps sorry to see Michelangelo once more at work on the cartoon, wrote to the Pope that if they did not handle him gently he would leave Florence as he had left Rome. And so things stood when in the November of that year, 1506, the Pope having made a triumphal march through Perugia and Imola, became master of Bologna, Giovanni Bentivoglio, in spite of his thumb-nail precautions, passing from that day out of sight. Once more the Pope applies to the Signoria for Michelangelo, who at length relenting, and bearing a safe-conduct from Soderini, appears before Julius at Bologna, and makes submission. The unhappy Monsignore who introduced the sculptor tactlessly excused him to the Pope on the grounds of the general ignorance of painters in all save their art. The Pope, anxious to explode his wrath, but evidently fearing to vent it on Michelangelo, finds here an excellent scapegoat. The unhappy bishop is hustled out with blows—so says Condivi—and in this strange but characteristic fashion peace is made between the two fierce spirits. Then came the making and casting of the great bronze statue of Julius at Bologna—of which more hereafter; then a few months in Florence, and early in 1508 the sculptor is once more back in Rome. But the scheme of the Tomb, which was still nearest to his heart, was never again taken up by Julius. The Sistine Vault intervened, and occupied four years; and when about the end of 1512 the chapel was thrown open, the great Pope had but a few months to live, and he died without having seen the Tomb on which he had once set his heart. On May 6, 1513, a second contract was drawn up with the executors of Julius,<sup>2</sup> Cardinal Leonardo Grosso della Rovere, and Cardinal Lorenzo Puccio, apostolic protonotary. The

<sup>1</sup> He left Rome the day before the foundation stone of the new St. Peter's was laid, 1506.

<sup>2</sup> Leonardo Grosso della Rovere was Cardinal of San Pietro in Vincoli.

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specifications of the design differ somewhat from the first. The tomb is no longer to be an oblong standing free, but is to have one end affixed to the wall. A memorandum in Michelangelo's handwriting seems to show greatly reduced dimensions,  $26\cdot3 \times 15$  as against the previous  $34\cdot6 \times 23$ . Nevertheless a letter by the sculptor says that the Cardinal had desired to continue the Tomb on a greater scale. No terminal figures are mentioned, but merely plain pilasters. There are to be two niches, *tabernacoli*, on each of the three faces, and in each of the said six niches two figures (twelve in all) of about a palm above the natural size; and in front of each pilaster a figure of similar size (twelve in all). On the platform, *piano*, above is to be the sarcophagus, *cassone*, with four feet, on which is to be the recumbent figure of Julius, and two figures at each end as supporters, all these five to be twice the natural size. There are to be six sitting figures on the platform of similar size. At the end of the tomb which is affixed to the wall is to be a chapel about thirty-five palms high, in which there are to be five figures greater in size than any of the rest because of their greater distance from the eye. There are to be three 'stories' in bronze or marble at choice of the executors. Seven years are to be allowed for completion of the design. It will be noticed that provision is made for a great increase of scale in the statues from the lower to the upper portions of the monument.

In this changed form the undertaking was still a vast one; but the work, now moved from the Borgo Sant' Angelo to the Macello dei Corvi, near the Forum of Trajan, made slow progress. On July 8, 1516, came a third contract between the sculptor and the same executors, with further reduction in size: the long flank is now given at eleven Florentine braccia—about 21 feet 6 in. And we read as before of twelve figures in the niches, and as before, of reliefs in bronze, of a sort of *tribunetta* on the platform above with the figure of the dead Pope (no *cassone* is now mentioned) between two other figures, and, as before, seated figures on the platform, and a Madonna and Child nearly eight feet high—a gradual reduction towards the final mutilated fragment as we now see it, but still a large and costly scheme. This contract must have been signed by the sculptor with little hope of its fulfilment. Probably the 'Moses' was already very far advanced, if not completed. The 'Prisoners' (*prigioni*, now in the Louvre) were as far advanced as they ever were to be, and other statues were partly 'set free from the marble.' The clay reliefs to be cast in bronze were perhaps also ready. But Giovanni dei Medici, Leo x., Michelangelo's



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old table-companion of the Casa Medici, now had claims upon him. He was already deep in his scheme—never to be carried out—for the façade of his own Medici Church of San Lorenzo in Florence. Years passed, and the Julius tomb was ever as a millstone round the neck of Michelangelo. From 1524 to 1526 and even later the sculptor lay under the terror of a lawsuit from the executors of Julius. In 1531 the new Medici Pope, Clement VII., son of Giuliano, came to the rescue with a brief which forbade Michelangelo, under pain of excommunication, to work on any commission save only on the Medici tombs. Therefore in 1532, on April 29th, the Duke of Urbino, Francesco Maria della Rovere, now the surviving representative of Julius, accepted the half loaf and signed a fourth contract, by which they were to be content with ‘six statues in marble commenced and not finished in Rome, or existing in Florence, finished by his own hand and labour: similarly all other things belonging to the said sepulchre.’ The contract, which is said to be drawn up with ‘the wish, consent, and assent of his holiness Clement VII.,’ allows three years for its completion, and stipulates that if Michelangelo fails to observe it, the contract is *ipso facto* to be void, and the Duke of Urbino may return to the former contracts.<sup>1</sup> An interesting letter from the duke’s agent to his master speaks in high glee of this achievement—six statues by Michelangelo being ‘worth an universe: they will be incomparable.’ It is interesting to find, too, from this letter, that the writer had suggested Santa Maria del Popolo, the favourite church of the Della Rovere, lately rebuilt by Sixtus IV. But Michelangelo found—and we can well understand—neither light nor space in the church. Julius had rebuilt San Pietro in Vincoli, one of the best lighted churches in Rome. And here it was decided that the monument should be placed in its mutilated form. Grosso della Rovere had already been buried there in 1520.

But this was not to be the end. The next two years saw the sculptor’s hands still full with the Medici tombs and the Laurentian Library. Then in 1534 came the death of Clement VII. and the succession of Alessandro Farnese as Paul III., by whose command all commissions were set aside for the ‘Last Judgment’ fresco of the Sistine Chapel. The new Pope was full of great enterprises and needed the services of Michelangelo, who had already broken contract number four and was technically subject to the pains and penalties

<sup>1</sup> In referring to these successive contracts I have omitted the questions of price, merely indicating the changes of form.

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therein set forth. But in 1537 the Pope intervened with a brief in which, after exonerating Michelangelo from blame, he absolves him and his successors from all penalties which he may have incurred and even from all claim for moneys received. Then at last, in 1542, the Duke of Urbino, who must have fully realised the uselessness of contracts made under Papal guarantee to be torn up by a successor, wrote a courteous letter to the *eccellentissimo* Messer Michelangelo, accepting the situation, and merely stipulating that the three statues entirely finished by Michelangelo's own hand, including that of Moses, should be placed upon the sepulchre. The other statues might be carried to their end by any efficient sculptor whom Michelangelo might select. The two statues from his own hand, besides the 'Moses,' were evidently the two *prigioni*—the 'Slaves,' now in the Louvre—for the sculptor soon after sent in a petition in which he explained that these statues no longer found any place in the present design, and he offered to substitute two other statues which he had begun to take their place, namely, the Active and Contemplative Life. Then followed the fifth and last formal contract of August 22, 1542, which enumerates the Madonna and Child, a Sibyl and a Prophet, Active and Contemplative Life—all to be completed by Raffaello di Montelupo, together with the 'Moses' entirely by Michelangelo. And so when, after nearly forty years, the Tomb of Julius is to be set up, the mighty first conception with its forty statues has diminished to one statue from the master's hand, and S. Pietro in Vaticano has been changed to S. Pietro in Vincoli. It is true that before 1545, the year of its final setting up, Michelangelo has relieved Montelupo of his liabilities for the 'Active' and 'Contemplative Life,' and made himself responsible for their completion,—though the words 'with his own hand' must surely be subject to a reserve. Of the other statues which we see upon the sepulchre, the 'Madonna and Child,' the 'Prophet,' and 'Sibyl' of the platform are due to Montelupo. The terminal figures were done by Giacomo del Duca, one of Montelupo's workmen, and the lamentable recumbent figure of Julius by Maso del Bosco. The masonry of the architecture was fitted by Francesco d' Amadore d'Urbino and Giovanni dei Marchesi, and does little credit to their workmanship. And so, when the sculptor was seventy years old, passed away the great dream that he had fashioned forty years before in the heyday of his manhood.

As we read the descriptions of Condivi and Vasari, even while we feel that they were little able to go deep enough to understand the

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allegory which doubtless underlay every portion of the work, even if Michelangelo in his far old age had been of a mind to recall his buried ghosts, we cannot fail to feel how far the spirit of this sepulchre has passed from that which marked the early Renaissance tombs of Italy. The ideal of Death which the sculptors of the early Renaissance, and indeed the sculptors of an earlier day back to Arnolfo di Cambio and to the primitive forerunners of the revival of sculpture, had been that of quiet sleep, of rest. Pope or cardinal, statesman or lawyer, warrior or lady, they lie above their tombs, one and all speaking to us of taking rest in sleep. Sometimes the Joy of Life to come is expressed in the presence of the radiant angels who gently draw aside the veil from the sleeping figure, or of happy children, *putti*, the emblem originally of eternal youth, above and around the happy sleeper. Sometimes the Madonna and her Child keep quiet watch from their tondo above the sleeping figure. And sometimes, especially in the Renaissance monuments of Rome, the Virtues, symbolised in their well-known forms, or it may be some saint or two, keep guard about the tomb. But the essence of the feeling is always the same, as it comes from the hand of the sculptor, especially if he be a Tuscan, namely, the rest which death brings, after life, rather than the retrospect and pompous display of the life which has been lived. This is true only of the sculptor; it was left to the epitaph-maker and the poet often to contradict this spirit in his inscription. But in the last decade of the fifteenth century one becomes aware of a certain restlessness, an uneasy stirring in the sleep. Not only do the quiet and lovely forms of the earlier tombs give way to richer, more ostentatious, more unmeaning ornament, but the sleeping figure is less restful and more contorted, till presently he is found to be a figure awake, often in a half-raised attitude. The ideal of sleep has ended and the purpose of a tomb begins to be to tell the tale, and often to vaunt the life, of him who lies there. Nowhere can this transition be better traced than in the matchless series of Roman Renaissance tombs in Santa Maria del Popolo. As we enter the church and see the exquisite tomb which Bregno and Mino wrought for Cristoforo della Rovere, and thence pass the lovely sleeping figure of Marcan-tonio Albertoni, we turn a corner and are in front of the tomb of Podocatharus, already more flaunting in its costliness, while a few paces farther on, as we step into the choir, we find the tomb of Basso della Rovere, which in 1507 Julius II. erected, from the hand of Andrea Sansovino, to his relation. The dead bishop lies sideways, uneasily cramped, towards the spectator, his head resting



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on his hand in a position which suggests nothing so much as a sick headache.

As the sixteenth century goes forward, the trumpeting of the dead men's lives grows louder, and when at the end of the century this trumpet-blast has ended, there seems nothing left for the sculptor to tell of but the sorry corruption of our poor mortality.

In this march of death Michelangelo comes just at the point where the sleep has ended, and the pride and pomp of life has asked to be recorded. He cannot tell his tale indeed with the empty, blatant vulgarity of the average sixteenth-century sculptor. Anything that he has to say will be said in worthy shape, and will be full of deep and impressive allegory. But the theme will be other and otherwise thought of than that of the earlier school of Rest. In this Tomb of Julius, designed while both he and its intended tenant were still burning with the energy of living men, there is no real thought of sleep. Its purpose in the mind of Michelangelo was to glorify the Papal power as a source and symbol of enlightenment and liberation from intellectual and moral darkness; to glorify Julius also, under a set of symbols, as the visible earthly representative of this mighty force, which gathers up in itself, in the mind of the designer, all the great attributes which have come down along the ages from prophet or sibyl, from lawgiver or leader, apostle or saint. Julius, perhaps, though not unmindful of the glory of the Papacy, had more in his thoughts the glory of himself as its representative. To Michelangelo the order was reversed. Admiring no doubt the qualities of energy and force in Julius which were so much after his own heart, he probably no more regarded him, in his individual character, as a paragon of all excellences, than he did when presently called upon in somewhat similar fashion to typify the rule of the Medici. He saw in the Papacy a mighty moral force, but no man was better able than he, who had known Rome in the days of the Borgia, to discern between the force and its exponent. In Julius he saw a man fitted by nature to be a leader of men, man of action, and in some sort also thinker, in some sort also, of necessity, lawgiver to a people. I cannot doubt that in the Moses, man of action and lawgiver, we find his symbol for Julius—the man of action doubtless weighing heavier in the balance. The very fact that this figure occupied his earliest care and was alone wrought to its completion, seems to speak to that interpretation. In the first designs, it will be remembered, nothing is said of any recumbent figure of the Pope. He was, one may

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conclude, to be present only in symbol, and nothing seems more natural than that Michelangelo should have set himself at the first to work out with all his fervour the master presence of the whole design.

The two figures which occupy the niches to the left present to us an enigma. They do not appear under the name of 'Contemplative' and 'Active Life' in any of the contracts until the last, in August 1542, just before which date they had also, as we have seen, been mentioned in Michelangelo's petition, in which he says that he desires to withdraw the two prisoners because they are by their size unsuited to the altered design, and 'not to be wanting in honour, he made a beginning (*dette cominciamento*) to two other statues, "Contemplative" and "Active Life," which are well enough advanced to be finished easily enough by any other masters.' Allusion is made to them under these names in the contract of 1542 between himself and Raffaello di Montelupo, and once more in a letter to Salvestro da Montalto of 1545. But nowhere did he speak of them as 'Rachel' and 'Leah,' and these titles appear to have grown upon them because Dante in the *Purgatorio* uses the two sisters as types of 'Contemplative' and 'Active Life.' The passage is as follows:—

*Sappia, qualunque il mio nome domanda,  
Ch'io mi son Lia, e vo movendo intorno  
Le belle mani a farmi una ghirlanda.  
Per piacermi allo specchio qui m' adorno ;  
Ma mia suora Rachel mai non si smaga  
Dal suo miraglio, e siede tutto giorno.  
Ell' è de' suoi begli occhi veder vaga,  
Com' io dell' adornarmi colle mani.*

'Let him know, whoever asks my name, that I am Leah, and that I go moving my fair hands to make a garland. For my pleasure, here I deck myself by the glass. But my sister Rachel never parts from her mirror, and sits all day. She longs ever for the sight of her own fair eyes, as I to adorn me with my hands.'

The reader must remember that the figure to the left with the uplifted hands is that which has been identified as 'Rachel' in 'Contemplative Life' (Plate xxv.), while the figure on the right who gazes into what appears to be a mirror, with which, by the way, a lock of her hair is intertwined, is considered to be 'Leah' or 'Active Life' (Plate xxvi.). In comparing the figures with the lines from Dante, it will at once be seen how very slight the correspondence



RACHEL  
(TOMB OF JULIUS II)

*S. Pietro in Vincoli, Rome*





LEAH  
(TOMB OF JULIUS II)

*S. Pietro in Vincoli*

## THE TOMB OF JULIUS

really is. 'Rachel' ('Contemplative Life') is not only not 'sitting all day' to gaze at her own eyes, but she lifts her hands and eyes to heaven, and her movement is altogether far more active than that of the other statue, who in a quiet attitude gazes abstractedly into the mirror. The identification becomes bewildering, and one is compelled to feel that if the sculptor created these two figures with the meaning from the very first which he attached to them in his letter, his allegory is more far-fetched and less convincing than in any other instance which we can think of from his works. Putting aside the titles of 'Rachel' and 'Leah,' for which probably Michelangelo never stood godfather, even under their names of 'Contemplative' and 'Active Life,' for which he made himself responsible, they do not seem to express their purpose to us—do not seem to have that depth of inner meaning which we have learned to ask for from the sculptor.

If no clue existed as to the meaning of these figures, I believe that nine out of ten students of Italian sculpture who stood before them for the first time would at once be struck by the fact that they are represented in the attitude and with the symbolic attributes which from the days of Niccolò's pulpit onwards were used by sculptors when they were called upon to represent the cardinal virtues—one of the favourite and most often repeated adjuncts to pulpit, shrine, or tomb. Hope is represented with eyes and often hands uplifted; Charity holding sometimes one, more often two, babes in her arms; Prudence gazing into a mirror, or holding a snake, the ancient type of wisdom (sometimes, as in Balducci's 'Shrine of St. Peter Martyr' at Milan, she does both). These attitudes and attributes were of long standing, and had become a commonplace of art. Now, if the reader recalls to himself the countless examples of the Virtues which occur in the sculpture of Italy, he will see in a moment that the 'Contemplative Life' (left) stands in the attitude of Hope—Donatello's statuette in the font of Siena will at once come into the mind—while the 'Active Life' (right) conforms completely to the symbolism of Prudence. Then one reminds oneself that Vasari, in describing the first design, after accounting for the *prigioni* which stood before the terminals, goes on to say that there were also various statues, bound, however, representing all the virtues and liberal arts ('*tutte le virtù ed arti ingegnose*'). The thought at once occurs to one: Had Michelangelo, at the time when he was first fashioning the 'Moses' to typify the qualities of a Julius, also 'liberated from the marble' his first thoughts

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for two of the virtues which perhaps most marked Julius—his sanguine yet foreseeing disposition? Both in the first and second designs there were to be twelve statues not specifically named. If these were the virtues and liberal arts—Faith, Hope, and Charity, Prudence, Temperance, and Justice; and six of the liberal arts<sup>1</sup>—we have the twelve. And it is easily conceivable that the sculptor should have begun by sketching out the pair of ‘Virtues’ which were to appear on each side of the ‘Moses.’ Then when the greater scheme was abandoned these were altogether put aside. When the scheme had dwindled in 1542 to three statues only, and Michelangelo finds that, after all, two of these, the ‘Prisoners,’ were unsuited for their places, he resorts once more to the discarded *abozzi*, and working upon them brings them to that state of advance in which he can offer them as a substitute for the ‘Prisoners’ (*prigioni*). But they can no longer appear as ‘Virtues’—two virtues out of six are but a mutilated equipment—and he must therefore alter their titles, while still preserving as far as possible their meaning in connection with the ‘Moses.’ ‘Hope’ and ‘Prudence’ pass with no great difficulty into ‘Active Life’ (of which Hope is the mainspring) and ‘Contemplative Life’ (which is the mainspring of Prudence). And the ‘Active’ and ‘Contemplative’ elements are the complements of the character of Moses the leader and the lawgiver (who typifies the same qualities in Julius). But here we are at once met with a difficulty. If this theory is the right one, then it is necessary to it that ‘Hope’ (or the figure with the upraised hands upon the left), also called ‘Rachel,’ should be ‘Active Life,’ while the ‘Prudence’ (the figure on the right gazing into the mirror, also called ‘Leah’) should be ‘Contemplative Life.’ But to-day they are identified in the sense exactly opposite to this. I venture to think that this identification is mistaken, and that it came about from the importation into the question of the names of Leah and Rachel, which have no authority from Michelangelo.<sup>2</sup> It must, however, be admitted that the presence of a garland in the right hand of the figure on the right is in favour of the accepted identification of the figure with Dante’s ‘Leah’—who ‘moves her fair hands to weave a garland.’ We have, too, to face the difficulty that Michelangelo’s

<sup>1</sup> The liberal arts were seven—Grammar, Rhetoric, Dialectic, Arithmetic, Geometry, Astronomy, Music, but they were not always represented in full number. Condivi also mentions Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture, which would increase the number to ten.

<sup>2</sup> Condivi, who says nothing of ‘Leah’ and ‘Rachel,’ refers these figures to quite another passage in the *Purgatorio*, Canto xxvii., wherein the Countess Matilda, walking in a meadow of flowers, typifies ‘Active Life,’ while ‘Contemplative Life’ is not represented.



## THE TOMB OF JULIUS

words in his petition do at first sight leave the impression that he was now offering two new statues made for the occasion.<sup>1</sup> I think, however, that the words may very well cover the circumstances as I have suggested them. That Michelangelo meant the statues as we see them for 'Active' and 'Contemplative Life,' there is of course no room to doubt, but that fact is not inconsistent with the possibility that he had slightly altered the original *abbozzi*, adding perhaps the garland, to their present purpose. It is hard to think that if from the very first the master had meant the right hand for 'Active Life,' he would not have given us a figure more expressive of force, less pensive, less passive, less contemplative. Beyond this point it is not safe to dogmatise.

These two figures were blocked out by the master himself. In the contract of 1532 it was agreed that they with three other statues, the 'Madonna,' a 'Prophet,' and a 'Sibyl,' commenced by Michelangelo, and now on the upper platform, were to be finished at given prices by Montelupo. But a little later Michelangelo took the two statues over and received payment for them as finished by his own hand. As we look at them, we find it very difficult to believe that the surfaces received no handling from the duller chisel of one of his workmen, perhaps Urbino. This, from the nature of the case, would hardly have been from Montelupo, who had by special agreement been relieved of his contract. It may be remarked that the expression 'by his own hand' is a continually recurring phrase in Italian contracts, and occurs in cases—from Niccolò Pisano onwards—in which it is quite obvious that other hands were used, and must have been known to have been used. It is very difficult to gauge the degree of obligation which this condition carried with it. But in its literal sense it was here a condition which, as in many other cases, was not strictly complied with. The figures are fine in their cast and pose, and bear the unmistakable impress of Michelangelo's large sense of design; but they have been dulled, and have lost impressiveness in their superficial finish. In this respect it is very interesting to compare them with the 'Moses' where the hand of the master alone was employed. The finish of the 'Moses' is superb. It has no rival in that respect in the whole range of Italian art. But its finish in no way obscures or dulls the breadth and vigour of the handling, which seem to be the natural

<sup>1</sup> It will not, however, be forgotten that in spite of the statement in the petition, in the contract of 1542 it is implied that the two statues were already advanced, as they were assigned to Montelupo *a finire*.

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speech in which the vigour of the thought is expressed. No figure has been more fiercely criticised for the spirit of its design. But an attack upon its technique has hardly as yet been made. Men miss in it, looking perhaps aside of its meaning and purpose, the modest, self-possessed reserve which the Bible portrays to us as characteristic of the man. The thoughtful, silent man who could lead a nation and shape its laws and its character, but like some other leaders of men shrunk from displaying himself in speech—a man of slow speech and of slow tongue, modest above all the men who were on the face of the earth—this is not the side of the character that Michelangelo puts forward. He sees him for us as the stern, determined, eager leader of men, more akin to Verrocchio's 'Colleone.' And in realising his vision he has made pose and expression, set of muscle and grasp of hand, all work together to the expression of this meaning.

Of the other statues which appear in the monument, the three which Montelupo finished upon Michelangelo's blocking out, namely the Prophet, the Sibyl, and the Madonna and Child,<sup>1</sup> while they have in them the echo of the master, are valuable object-lessons to us of the gulf which separates that which is great in art from that which is second-rate. The statue of the Madonna, which is so far from the type of all other Madonnas designed or wrought by Michelangelo, that one is tempted again to ask if it could have been originally blocked out for the virtue of 'Charity,' is of no small beauty, and perhaps owes less to the hand of Montelupo (or Scherano) than the other two, the Sibyl and the Prophet, which are empty and dull. The recumbent 'Julius' by Maso del Bosco is beneath criticism.

<sup>1</sup> There is some confusion with regard to this Madonna. In Michelangelo's final contract of August 20, 1542, with the Duke of Urbino, this statue is one of the five handed over to Montelupo, 'a finire per detto prezzo' (550 scudi). It is at the same time described as '*Una Nostra Donna con il Putto in braccia quale di già in tutto è finita.*' Next day, August 21, the five statues are again mentioned in the direct contract with Montelupo. Nevertheless, Vasari speaks of the Madonna as finished by Scherano da Settignano, on a model by Michelangelo. Probably Scherano was one of Montelupo's workmen, who did the work on the statue, but it is obviously impossible to reconcile the various statements in their literal form.



*S. Pietro in Vinculi, Rome*

TOMB OF JULIUS II





VICTORY

*Bargello*

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE DERELICTS OF THE GREAT TOMB

IT remains to say some few words about the surviving sculptures which, though they did not take their place in the 'Tomb of Julius' in its final shape, in S. Pietro in Vincoli, are either known or seem to have been prepared for it. Foremost amongst these stand the two superb unfinished statues known as the 'Slaves,' *prigioni*, 'Prisoners' of the Louvre (Plates XXIII., XXIV.). These were the two figures which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, were at the last moment discarded in favour of the 'Active' and 'Contemplative Life.' Michelangelo made a present of these to Roberto Strozzi, in gratitude for the kindness which he had received from him when he lay ill in his house. An existing receipt for their transport shows that in 1550 they were sent by Strozzi to France, to Francis I., and were presently given to the Constable de Montmorency, who placed them in his château at Écouen, near Paris. Richelieu afterwards owned them in his château in Poitou. Thence they migrated to Paris, and at the end of the eighteenth century were seen in a disused stable attached to a carpenter's shop. From this last prison they were released about the year 1793, when they were sold by auction, and were purchased for the Republic by M. Lenoir, who transferred them to their present position in the Renaissance Sculpture Gallery of the Louvre.

The reader will already have seen enough to assure himself that neither Condivi nor Vasari may be regarded as infallible oracles on the mere statistics of the Tomb of Julius, still less upon the deeper meanings of Michelangelo's work. These *prigioni* are described by one of these writers as representing 'The Liberal Arts, as Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, each with her symbol so as to be easily recognised, indicating that as Pope Julius, so also all the Virtues were Prisoners of Death.' Vasari, whose confusions as to this tomb are even greater, says, 'These Prisoners were all the Provinces conquered by this pontiff and made subject to the Apostolic Church.' As we

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stand before these figures, we become convinced that our authors tell us at once too much and too little of their meaning—too much, since they go too far in defining, and therefore limiting the meaning; too little, since they fail to see how they embrace and extend over the whole tragedy of the human spirit ‘groaning in bondage until now.’ Yet both men are so far right that we do see in these strong, pathetic figures struggling to be free, the symbol of the imprisoned human spirit—by no means excluding the liberal arts and virtues from the action of that spirit—which can be freed only by some great enlightening force, and which returns, baffled, to its bonds when that enlightenment is removed. It is, in fact, an allegory of the bondage and freedom of the human soul—an allegory in another shape of light and darkness, to be ere long presented to us again in the Tombs of the Medici—which is in this world dependent very much, for its freedom or its bondage, for its light and for its darkness, on the existence in a concrete form of these great moral, enlightening forces, of which to Michelangelo’s mind the Papacy is one of the greatest abstract ideals, while the Pope is its visible concrete expression.

And human effort and agony, struggle and despair, strength and exhaustion, have never been so shadowed forth as in these marvellous visions, which assimilate themselves not to any one single phase of man’s effort to rise out of a lower self, not to Virtue as moral only, nor to Virtue as Art liberal, but to the whole range of effort by which the spirit of man seeks to escape its bondage, seeks in all things both of morals and mind to rise from the unworthy to the worthy. The left hand figure of these two prisoners, who stands at full height, his left arm above his head, his right arm raised towards the bond which the hand has just failed to free, seems to be in a half-swoon of exhaustion—he is known to the catalogues as the ‘Dying Slave’ (Plate xxiv.)—a noble pathetic type of human effort in its moment of momentary failure and exhaustion, but hardly, I think, of death. The type here is far higher than that of the other ‘Prisoner’ (Plate xxiii.), still strongly tied and bound, his limbs more contorted in his struggle. There is perhaps somewhat more of animal passion in the conception of this second ‘Prisoner,’ though it is still full of the same appealing pathos. They might stand to us the one as a type of repentance, the other of remorse. The one as of sin through human passion, the other through animal passion—if there be such a distinction. The one fainting with the pain of the mixed memories of life, the other still tortured with the pain of present struggle. They take hold in fact of our imagina-





UNFINISHED STATUE

*Boboli Gardens, Florence*



UNFINISHED STATUE

*Boboli Gardens, Florence*

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tion as do all of Michelangelo's greater creations, not in one but in many shapes.

The first of the two figures—the upstanding figure with the arm raised—is the more finished as to surface. The rough scoring has in parts been made to disappear, and I think not entirely by Michelangelo's own hand, nor yet to its very great advantage. As one looks from one figure to the other one learns again that finish in the true sense does not lie in the texture of a surface. In the first figure the marble which supports it is rudely scored with bold chisel strokes. If we examine the right and upper portion of this support we shall find what seems like the rude beginning of some ape-like head—possibly intended to have been carried out into some further expression of bestiality. There is with it a sort of dim shaping out of the marble which has been left into a bent arm. It does not, however, follow that Michelangelo had any intention of bringing it to a definite result. In removing marble an accidental shape may occur and suggest a momentary thought to the sculptor. It is as easy to remove marble in one way as in another, and it may merely have been that an idea sprang out of the marble and a few strokes sufficed to give it a rude shape. The second, or struggling 'Prisoner,' is almost entirely in the rough. There is much to come away from the throat and neck, and we also see the chisel marks still unobliterated where a larger form of the left leg about and above the heel has been reduced. The modelling of this leg, especially about the knee, is superb.

Of other statues which are thought to have been designed for one or other of the phases through which the design passed, we may mention first the statue now in the lower open court of the National Museum (Bargello) at Florence, known as the 'Victory' (Plate XXVIII.), in which a young and athletic figure of great height kneels upon and seems to be overcoming the crouching form of an old man. We may at once dismiss the fancy, in spite of Vasari, which sees in this old man a portrait of Michelangelo himself. If this figure belonged to the early designs for the Tomb it must have been intended for one of the niches of the lower story. That it came originally from the hand of Michelangelo I cannot doubt. By some writers it has even been ranked as one of the finest of his works. Personally I find it impossible not to see in it in its present stage the finishing hand of a later sculptor, who in elaborating the surface has robbed the modelling of some of its virility while he has also seriously exaggerated certain characteristics of the proportions, such as the extreme smallness of the head in rela-



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tion to the body. Yet the statue, as we see it, has in it a certain grand expressiveness which gives it a claim to far greater respect than, to judge by its somewhat forlorn position, it seems to have obtained. Without going so far as M. Reymond, who describes it as the most beautiful nude that the master executed, we may yet rank it high. Its near neighbour in the same court, the so-called 'Adonis' (Plate cxxv.), was again probably one of the original *abozzi* for the prostrate figures below the victorious statues which we see filling the niches in the Uffizi sketch. A later sculptor has chiselled and smoothed the surface, and, adding the boar's head and the gaping wound, has supplied us with an 'Adonis' which we could well have spared for Michelangelo's own idea of his work.

The so-called 'Pietà,' which may be seen, even less honoured, in the courtyard of the Rondanini Palace in the Corso of Rome (Plate cxxvi.), which it shares to-day with a few second-rate antiques, with motor cars and other vehicles of the family, is by some authorities also connected with the 'Tomb of Julius,' by others denied to the hand of Michelangelo. I see in it one of those blocks which in later life we know him to have worked upon from sheer delight in the use of the sculptor's chisel, or, as he put it, 'for exercise.' It was probably one of those unfinished works which stood in his studio at his death. It has gone wrong in the working. Too much has been removed from the torso and upper portions of the chief figure under the vigorous chisel-blows of the old man. It has gone to a stage which admits no recovery, and the sculptor seems to have used an available portion of the marble for another exercise. A splendidly wrought arm and hand is carved on an upstanding piece of marble on the left, whether for mere pleasure or for removal to another statue we cannot say. It may well be that physical energy was failing when he left these chisel marks—he was probably past eighty—on this Rondanini block, and that he struck the marble from time to time as the old spirit revived, before it died away again; and this not in the old impulsive waywardness, nor in the old never-satisfied fashion, but just because he must, so long as his hand could lift a chisel, beat the marble, though he had not the physical strength to see a subject through. The mallet still drove home. The marble has been removed in the old trenchant way, and the teeth of the *gradina* are to be seen strong and clean in the feet of the figure. There is deep pathos in this unfinished, mutilated group. The figure of the woman, a mere shadow seen dimly, is full of feeling, full of the same touching vagueness which lives in the last 'Pietà' of the Duomo

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of Florence. We cannot gauge the exact thought which it arouses in us, but we are conscious of an influence which stirs our depths.

In the Boboli Gardens in Florence, buried in the mud walls of a sham grotto which would do discredit to the taste of a riverside tea-garden, are four blocked-out figures by Michelangelo (Plates xxix., xxx.), which are thought to have been intended for the Tomb of Julius. Their measurements do not seem to suit the requirements of any of the designs which are known to us, and it may be that they were destined for the abandoned façade of San Lorenzo. They show all the breadth and largeness of the master's handiwork, and two are especially fine. But until they are set free from their present vulgar surroundings it is hardly possible to form a true estimate of their value.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE BRONZE STATUE OF JULIUS II. AT BOLOGNA

WE must now resume the interrupted chronology of the master's work where we left it in the year 1506. That year saw the strange scene of reconciliation between Pope and sculptor at Bologna. A few days later Michelangelo was again sent for and received commission to execute a seated figure of Julius in bronze, to be placed above the portal of the church of San Petronio, the saint dear to the hearts of the conquered Bolognesi. Michelangelo at this time had little or no experience in bronze-casting. At no time in his life did he take kindly to it, and to its elaborate and often disappointing processes. Indeed we must remind ourselves that Michelangelo was, in the first place, a sculptor according to the literal sense of the word, one who carves his ideas out of marble. Modelling he employed as a means to an end, to serve him for making sketches (rather than strictly speaking models), on a small scale generally, of the marble group or statue. Sometimes, perhaps most often, he did even without the modelled sketch, and worked straight on the marble block with charcoaled outlines as his guide. The process of bronze-casting required, in the first place, a full-sized clay model, to be followed by several precarious and tedious processes. Michelangelo sought to excuse himself on the ground of his lack of experience. 'Cast it as often as you will,' said Julius, 'till it is finished,' and so the short-lived statue was set about. In a very few months, namely, by April 1506, he had built up, in a shed near San Petronio, his clay model, some fourteen feet in height, and proceeded to the purchase of his seven hundred and twenty pounds of wax which was needed for the casting by the *ciro perduto* process, by which a thin film of wax poured into a hard mould made over the clay model, is eventually melted out and replaced by molten bronze. He had for assistants Lapo d'Antonio, a master of the Opera del Duomo, Lodovico Lotti, apprentice of Pollaiuolo, and Piero Urbano. The first-named proved a good-for-nothing and was sent about his business, Lodovico following of his own accord. Presently Michelangelo obtained the aid from Florence





JULIUS II  
(RAPHAEL)

National Gallery



## THE BRONZE STATUE OF JULIUS II. AT BOLOGNA

of Bernardino d'Antonio del Ponte, chief ordnance founder to the Republic, one whom he would have trusted, said he, to cast without fire. Nevertheless the first casting failed, the metal not flowing except to the lower half. At a second attempt it succeeded. Then followed two months of cleaning with chisel and chasing all roughnesses from the metal, which Michelangelo insisted upon doing himself. At length, on February 15, 1508, on the day and hour which the astrologers appointed, the great statue was hoisted into its place. There is a well-known story, already quoted, that Julius, in answer to the question what should be put in his right hand, replied 'Not a book but a sword.' Ultimately the pontiff sat with right hand raised in attitude to threaten or to bless as the onlooker should interpret it. But there had been some error in the calculations of the astrologers and still more in those of Julius, who should have known human nature and the changes of Italian politics better. He sat there in bronze to bless or curse the Bolognesi above their favourite portal less than four years, and was then, in 1511, ignominiously hauled from his vantage-ground, leaving no further sign for us in the world of his having existed than a large hole in the pavement below. The metal, some of which had once served for the great bell in the tower of the expelled Bentivoglio, was now in part melted into a cannon for the Duke of Ferrara, and was christened 'Giulia,' while the rest went forth to do its duty, as current coin, in the shape of Bolognese *baiocchi*. So ended the great bronze statue a year or so before the death of Julius.

Perhaps this is what Michelangelo refers to, when, in 1512, he says in a letter that though the Sistine Chapel frescoes have ended well, other things in art do not go as he would wish. He was back in the spring of 1508 for a few months at Florence, where his contracts for the Piccolomini statues and the twelve 'Apostles' of the Duomo were still upon his hands, and then after March 13, though we do not know the precise date, he was once more in Rome. During his year in Bologna he had lived a life of the utmost hardship, and at the end of his commission he found that his profit amounted to four ducats and a half. He and his assistants slept four in a bed, and often enough he reached even that uncomfortable resting-place so wearied that he lay down in his clothes. He seems, like many a man in a less degree who absorbs himself in his work, to have been insensible to discomfort and quite unable to make provision for himself. Meanwhile the service of Julius—in spite of the four and a half ducats of balance—has evidently for him an irresistible attraction.



## CHAPTER X

### THE SISTINE VAULT

WHEN late in March of 1508 Michelangelo found himself once more in Rome, Julius showed no sign of any further enthusiasm for his Tomb. He had already in his mind another project. In 1475 his uncle, Francesco della Rovere, Sixtus iv., had employed Giovanni dei Dolci<sup>1</sup> to build the Papal Chapel in the Vatican now known as the Sistine. A few years later this chapel had received the great series of frescoes by the best Tuscan and Umbrian masters of the day—Botticelli, Ghirlandaio, Perugino, Pintoricchio, Signorelli, and others, which we see to-day upon its walls. But the vault remained in bare plaster. Julius resolved to decorate this void space. Vasari and Condivi both assert that his selection of Michelangelo was due to a base and evil-minded prompting by Bramante, who, feeling sure that the sculptor through inexperience must bring it to failure, hoped thereby to wreck his reputation and leave his own countryman<sup>2</sup> and godson, Raffaello d'Urbino—who by the way was not really his godson—without a rival. The statement is too preposterous to be worth notice but for the fact that it has been accepted by so many subsequent writers. It is true that Michelangelo himself in later years accepted it when bitterness of spirit and worry of brain and nerve made him ready to take views of other men which were not worthy of his better self. But the charge carries its own refutation from whichever side we approach it. Bramante was a sound and capable judge. He knew well the recent triumph of Michelangelo which was on every tongue, in the design of the 'Cartoon of Pisa.' He knew, too, the capacity of Michelangelo to overcome difficulties in technics of which he had had no experience, as in the bronze statue just set up at Bologna. He must have known, too, that the sculptor, though he had not put the 'cartoon' into fresco, had yet shown no fear of the

<sup>1</sup> Vasari says Baccio Pontelli, but Eugene Müntz published a document found in the Archivio di Stato di Roma which proves Giovanni dei Dolci to have been the architect.

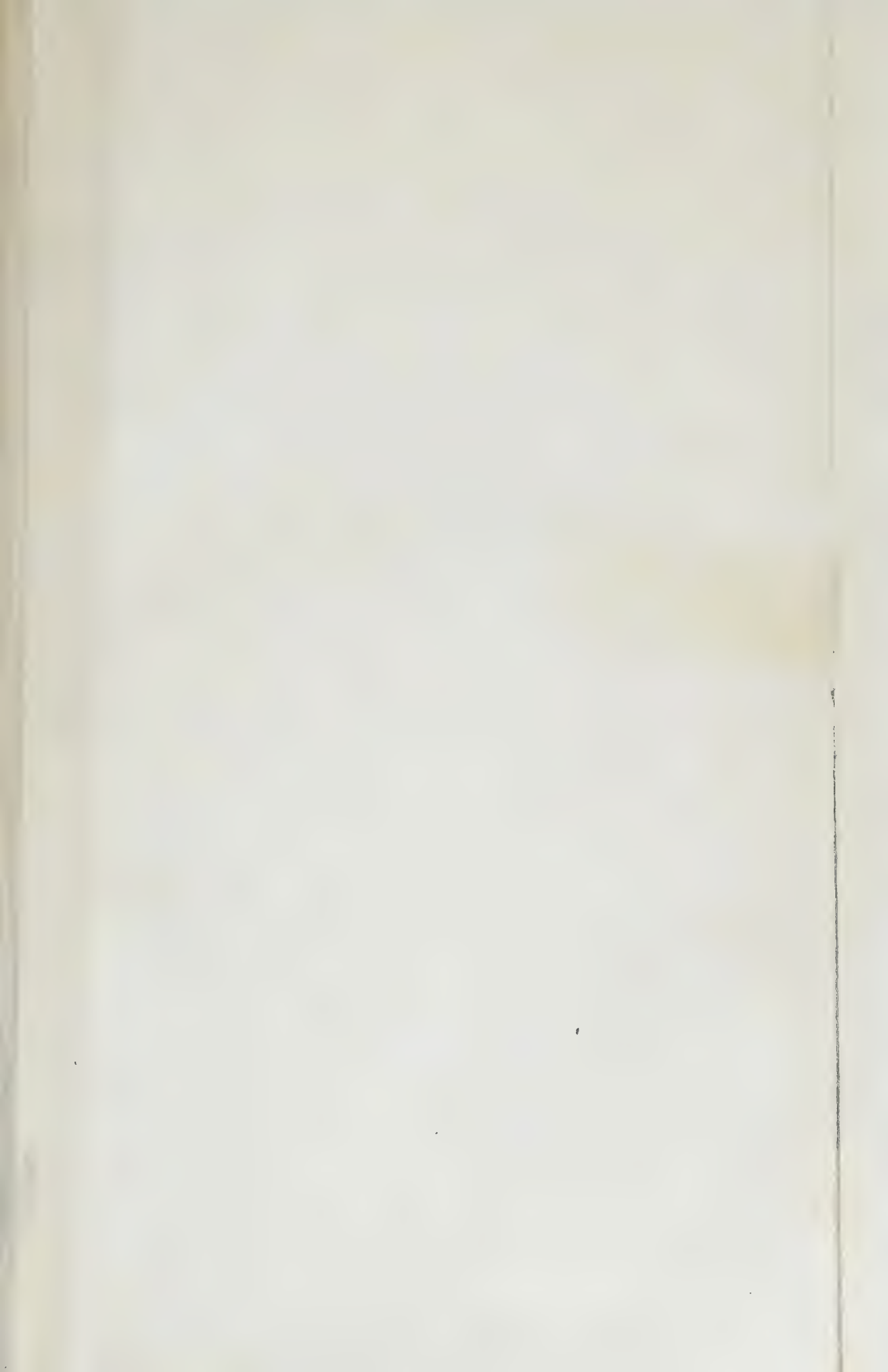
<sup>2</sup> Bramante was probably of Castel Durante in the Duchy of Urbino.



THE SISTINE CHAPEL







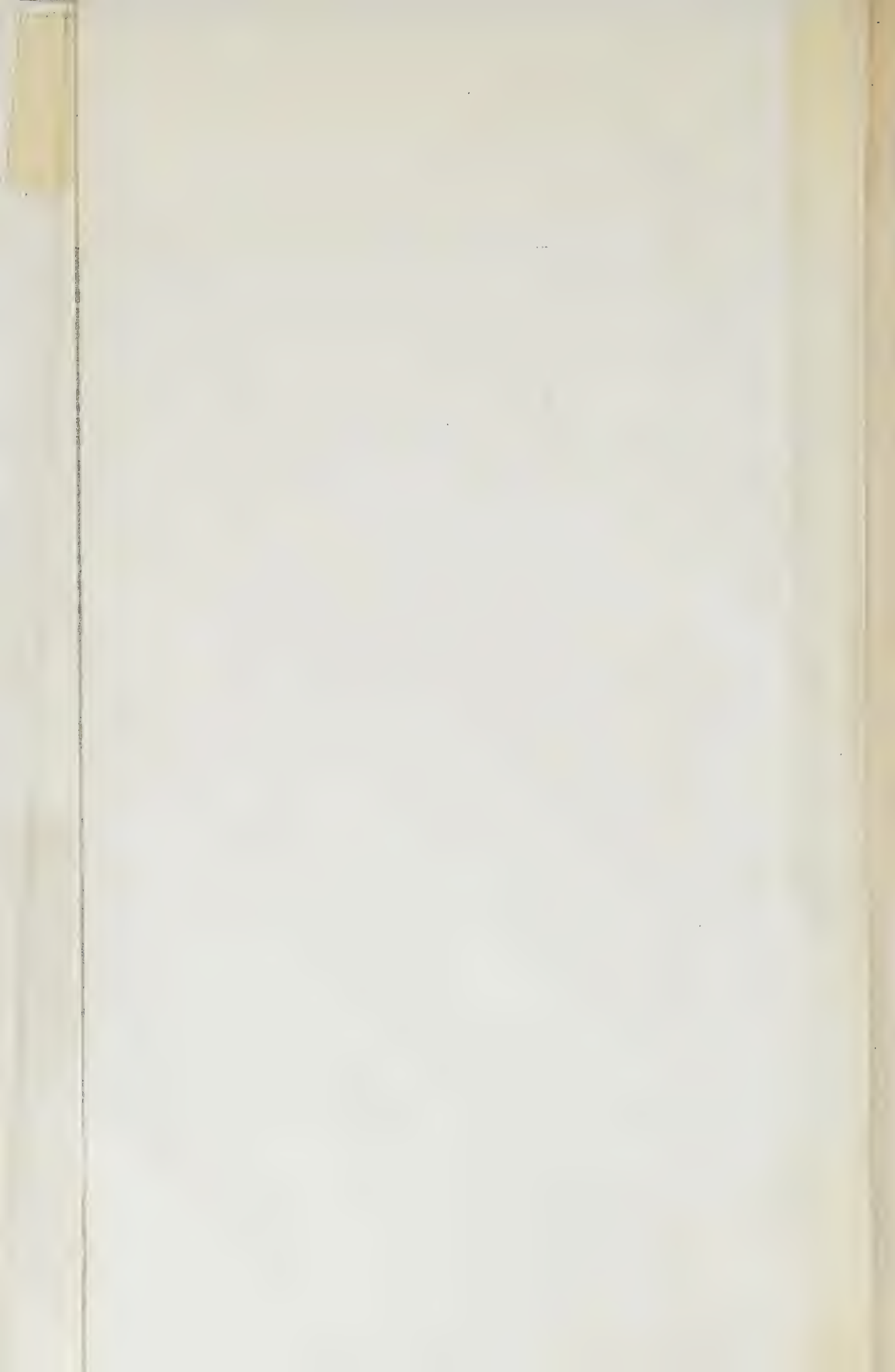


THE VAULT



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## THE SISTINE VAULT

result ; and, moreover, he could hardly be ignorant that he had in his days in the studio of Ghirlandaio seen the process carried through in the choir of Santa Maria Novella. He was little likely as a man of sense—even if he were base enough of character—to risk his own career on such a fall. For Michelangelo's failure would have brought with it his own downfall. In such event there were busy tongues enough about the Vatican to have brought the treacherous business to the ears of the Pope, and Julius was no safe subject for such costly experiment. Vasari, too, asserts that Bramante's scheme, in which, by a clever change from a singular to a plural, he seems to associate Raphael himself, was framed in order to divert Michelangelo from sculpture where his reputation was sure, to painting which he had hardly hitherto essayed, in fact to bring the sculptor away from his craft, wherein there could scarcely be rivalry with a painter, into a very dangerous rivalry indeed. The folly of the charge is almost as pitiful as its unworthiness. If Bramante suggested the name of Michelangelo to Julius, as he may have done, though Julius knew the powers of the man perhaps better than he, it was done, one may assure oneself, in sincerity—a genuine recognition of the powers of one whom he personally disliked ; in the same spirit as Michelangelo's own recognition of Bramante's talents. 'No one can deny,' he writes in a later day, 'that Bramante was powerful in architecture as any one who has lived from the ancients until now.' The base conduct attributed to Bramante by Vasari is in curious contrast with the writer's own summing up of the old architect's character when he came to write his life.

Michelangelo himself displayed reluctance ; it was not, he said, his profession, and he suggested Raffaello d'Urbino in his place ; but the Pope would hear of no other, and Michelangelo set about his task. The commission cannot have been given earlier than the latter days of March 1508, since on March 13 the sculptor was still in Florence. Once more we stand amazed at the imaginative genius and creative power of this man, which has no parallel in the whole history of art as it is known to us. The Pope's first project had been confined to a simpler scheme in which the twelve apostles were to be represented on the vault. But when Michelangelo began to reduce this scheme to shape, it appeared to him, as he says, but a poor thing, and he places before Julius the larger scheme which has already taken shape in his imagination. Then follows of necessity the preparation of drawings, and of the cartoons for all the greater subjects : to say nothing of all

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the practical details with which he had to burden his mind. The building of a scaffold had been entrusted to Bramante, the official architect of the Vatican, who provided a swinging platform suspended by ropes through numerous holes in the vaulting—these were fatal in the last degree to the work which was in hand. Fate willed it that these two men should be at enmity. The architect's scaffold was removed, and Michelangelo, who if he had not been sculptor, painter, architect, would have been a great engineer, devised a scaffold<sup>1</sup> of such mechanical excellence that it dispensed almost entirely with the use of ropes. The platform or floor, extending along the whole length of the roof, reached only to about the level at which the semicircles of the glass windows commence, thus allowing free access to every part of the vault. Movable lesser platforms placed on this deck, probably on wheels, enabled him to reach the highest portions. Access was probably obtained from the balcony which runs outside the building at the level of the window. The construction of this scaffold must have taken place in the very same month of April in which Michelangelo was occupied with the design for the ceiling, since on May 11 the mason, Piero di Jacopo Rosselli, signed the first receipt for ten ducats for work done, the rough-cast plastering, in the chapel. Further payments followed at intervals up to July 27, when the sixth and last was made, and, allowing a short interval only, at so hot a time of the year, for the necessary drying, the chapel vault was ready to begin upon early in August,<sup>1</sup> in which month, and not upon the tenth of May 1508, Michelangelo probably began the transference of his designs to the ceiling. A memorandum from his hand dated May 10 certainly states that he began work on that day—but 'work' can hardly, from the nature of the case, mean the actual painting of the frescoes. The assistants moreover whom he proposed to employ had not assembled till the end of July. These, who were obtained by the good offices of his old boy-friend of the Ghirlandaio days, were Granacci himself, Giuliano Bugiardini, Jacopo L'Indaco, Agnolo di Donnino, and Bastiano, called Aristotele da Sangallo. The coalition was not of long duration. A very short experience showed the master that he had nothing

<sup>1</sup> The story which is told of Michelangelo's 'prentice days with Ghirlandaio, when the latter found the boy engaged on a drawing of the scaffolding for the master's frescoes in Santa Maria Novella, comes naturally to the reader's mind.

<sup>2</sup> A deed preserved in the archives of Florence, signed by Michelangelo on August 11, 1508, sets free his uncle Francesco's estate, and could only have been signed by the master in person. He therefore could hardly have been in Rome again much before the middle of August, about which time perhaps the frescoes were commenced. It was two days of hard post-riding from Florence to Rome at the speediest.





THE SEPARATION OF LIGHT FROM DARKNESS



THE CREATION OF SUN AND MOON

*Sistine, Rome*

## THE SISTINE VAULT

to learn—unless he needed further lessons in patience—from these exponents of the art of fresco, while they were quite incompetent to interpret and to execute his designs. He dismissed them with full payment, but with somewhat scant ceremony—so Granacci seemed to think,—and henceforth contented himself with the aid of the inevitable plasterers, labourers, and colour grinders, without whom the execution of such work is impossible.

The process of fresco painting is, briefly, and omitting all minutiae, as follows. A wall, thoroughly sound and free from damp—the neglect of this precaution has often been fertile of ruin—is prepared with rough-cast plaster, *arricciatura*, of ordinary character but of the best material, which must then be allowed to become thoroughly dry. Over this the final coat, *intonaco*, of fine quality—Michelangelo used the best lime and finely powdered marble dust—is laid day by day in quantity sufficient for the day's work. To this *intonaco* while still fresh, *al fresco*, the design is immediately transferred by pouncing (*i.e.* dusting coloured powder through prickholes) or tracing, and the painter immediately works upon it in colour ground up and mixed with water. The colour thus incorporated with the wet *intonaco* dries in it and with it. Any *intonaco* which has not been painted on at the end of a day's work has to be cut away and next day the fresh *intonaco* has to be joined up to the edge of the old. Alteration in what has already been painted is impossible, but retouching *al secco*, that is, on the dry surface, by means of tempera colour may be used. (It follows from what has been said that close examination of a fresco will often reveal the junctures, and tell how much was accomplished at any single sitting. Heath Wilson, shortly before the publication of his work in 1876, had the opportunity of closely inspecting the frescoes from a specially constructed platform. He tells us that each of the colossal figures of young men known as the 'Athletes' occupied four days or separate sittings.<sup>1</sup> The figure of Adam in the 'Creation'—one of the most highly finished in the series, ten feet in length—occupied three days or perhaps four, there being a doubt as to the true number of junctures. 'The head of Adam occupied one sitting.' It may here be said that the finish is throughout the frescoes very high and the painting very careful, so that when photographed at close quarters they yield as fine a result as when seen from below. The *intonaco* had been brought to a smooth and close texture on which Michelangelo modelled his figures with the brush, blending this modelling

<sup>1</sup> It is obvious that we can only use the word day as equivalent to a sitting.



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into light and shade akin to that which would fall upon a bas-relief. The pure white surface of the *intonaco*, made up of lime and marble dust, shining through the colour helps to produce the pleasant silvery grey which is the prevailing tone of the lights over all the vault. There is no blackness nor overweight in any of the shadows, nor is there anywhere the least over-emphasis of any one colour, the whole blending into one quiet low-toned scale of harmony out of which the great designs tell their story with nothing to distract us from their influence. It is clear that whatever difficulty Michelangelo encountered in the process at starting, he overcame it completely, and that from the early stages of his work he found no technical impediments to the free expression of his thought, though not a few to the comfort of his painting from its after results. He had parted with his young artist-assistants in November 1508, and presently mildew began to form upon the finished work, to his great depression of mind, which feeling he expresses to his father in a letter written in January: 'I am still in great perturbation, for it is now a year that I have not had a groat (*un grosso*) from the Pope, and I do not claim it, because my work does not go forward in a manner that seems to deserve it. And this is the difficulty of the work; and, once more, it is not my profession.' And at intervals, even when the work was at its best—as for instance in October 1509, just before its triumphant opening to view—the mere physical exhaustion produced the same despair. 'I am here,' he writes, 'in great distress and with the greatest fatigue of body, and I have not friends of any sort, and I want none: and I have not even time that I can eat for my necessity.'

Let us, pursuing our mere statistics to their end, try to realise what this physical feat amounted to. The vault of the Sistine is said to be about 132 feet long by 45 broad. The number of separate subjects great and small which Michelangelo painted on it is stated at one hundred and forty-five, counting however each pair of *putti* in the pilasters as two. The separate figures are counted at three hundred and ninety-four, the largest of some twelve feet high, the smallest, namely the aforesaid *putti*, of perhaps four feet high. This calculation, however, includes many half figures and even heads which appear in the groups. As we have seen, the painter could hardly have begun the real work before the middle of August 1508; but adopting the more liberal calculation from May 10, we find that to the day of its final exhibition to the world, which may be placed approximately on January 1, 1513, we have, not counting Sundays, fourteen hundred

## THE SISTINE VAULT

and forty-nine days. From this must be made further deductions for the days of winter when work was suspended for fear of the action of frost on the wet *intonaco*. Still further deductions must be made for the many days of winter when the imperfect light made work impossible; and for the loss of several weeks, probably not less than four at the least, when the scaffold was removed to show the half-finished frescoes. The result, however, even if we were to ignore these deductions and treat each day as a full working day, would give three and a half days for each figure great and small, including the many cartoons, studies and arrangements for the necessities of the work. Small wonder if, tough as he was, and trained to hardship and endurance, he found himself often 'in the greatest fatigue of body.'

In October 1509, the work being 'half completed,' the impatient Julius could wait no longer. He had already, a month earlier, inspected the frescoes from the scaffold, but he now insisted on their being shown to his people. On All Saints' Day, November 1, accordingly, the scaffold having been removed, the unfinished work was thrown open to the Roman world. We are unable to gauge the exact meaning of the words 'half completed.' They have been taken to mean that Michelangelo had completed the entire half nearest to the entrance, the other half remaining in the bare plaster. It is far more probable that the whole series of subjects along the upper portion of the vault was completed, leaving the lower portion or either side, with the 'Prophets,' 'Sibyls,' and subject-groups in the angles as yet untouched. The reception which greeted the work was enthusiastic—but in Condivi's narrative the snake once more appears in the Paradise. In spite of the chorus of praise which welcomed the great achievement, Bramante, urged by Raphael himself, is made to petition Julius that Raphael may undertake the unfinished half, and Michelangelo in his turn to appear before Julius with fierce invective against Bramante and scornful exposure of his vandalisms and incapacities with regard to St. Peter's. As the story appears cheek by jowl with a statement in the very next sentence whose accuracy we can easily appraise, 'all this work Michelangelo completed in twenty months without help or even any one to grind the colours,' we may without uncharity place one value on both his records. Vasari, following Condivi, repeats them both. It is noticeable that neither writer describes Michelangelo as unmasking to the Pope the supposed villany of Bramante in originally proposing him for the task—villainy which he must have been made aware of by that date if ever it had existed.

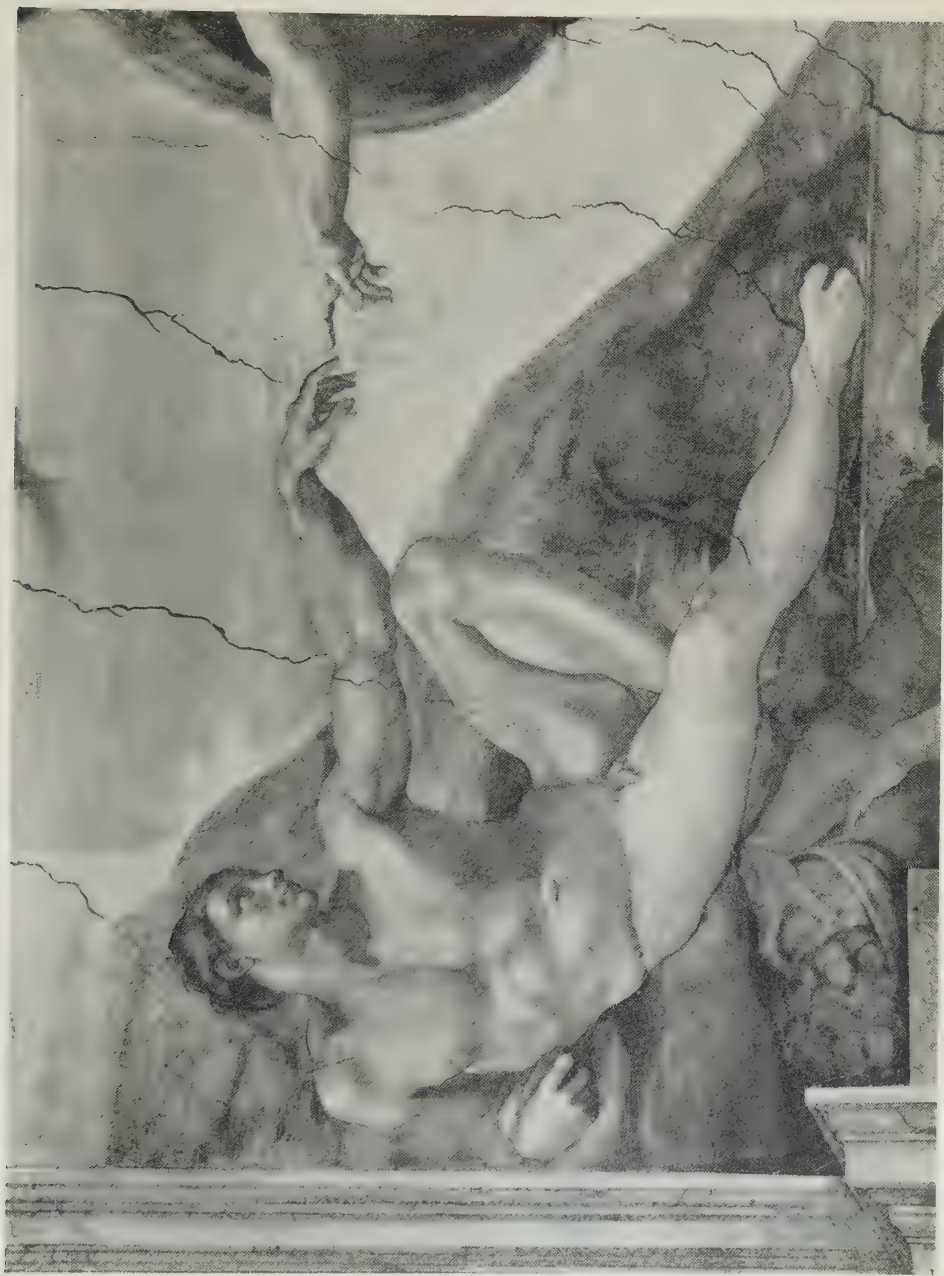
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The scaffold, after the interval, seems to have been re-erected, not in its entirety, but in portions as the work required—since in a letter of September 7, 1510, the painter writes to his father that he is still without payment from the Pope to enable him to complete the platform, *il ponte*, for the part which remained of his fresco. It was taken down finally in the last days of the year 1512. The story is told that Julius—who appears to have shared the taste for gilding which the earlier Della Rovere is said to have shown in connection with Cosimo Rosselli's fresco in the same chapel—desired Michelangelo to replace the scaffold in order to add gold in many parts, and that he was met by the witty reply, 'Holy Father, the Prophets and holy men of those days were little wont to wear gold about their persons.' Julius lived but a few months after the completion of this the greatest and most permanent achievement of his papacy.

Yet a few more statistics as to the vicissitudes which have befallen these frescoes. Even in the days of Julius III. fissures began to show themselves, and the Pope left his rooms in the Torre Borgia hard by lest the chapel should collapse. Constant mention is made in the diaries of officials, and in the pontifical archives, of the anxiety which was caused by the danger to the frescoes. Pius V., 1565, gave commission to Girolamo da Forlì, who however died; and Domenico Carnevale of Modena was called in to mend the fissures. He remade a portion of the *intonaco* in the 'Sacrifice of Noah.' Under Urban VIII., in 1625, the frescoes underwent a thorough cleaning at the hands of Simone Laghi, decorator to the Vatican. The dust was removed with bread, which, where the dust had hardened, was wetted. 'Thus,' the document asserts, 'they were returned to their pristine beauty without having received any injury.' Under Clement XI., about 1712, the frescoes took their share of *ripulitura generale*, and again under Clement XIII., in 1762, they underwent a barbarous retouching (*barbaro ritocco*). Richard says, in his description of Italy, that on this occasion he saw inferior artists engaged in draping the nudities of the 'Last Judgment.' This is confirmed by Chattard, who names Stefano Pozzi as chief restorer, but he adds that the *barbaro ritocco* only touched the 'Last Judgment.' In 1798 an explosion in the Castle of S. Angelo shook down the figure above the 'Delphic Sibyl,' but it remained happily unrestored.

In the last few years the frescoes have been once more taken in hand under the best auspices and with admirable results. During some repairs to the roof in 1903 the opportunity was taken to examine





Sistine, Rome

ADAM

X



Sistine, Rome

THE CREATION OF EVE

## THE SISTINE VAULT

the vault with a view to arresting the progress of decay. A committee was formed of which the Marchese Giuliano Sacchetti was president. It included Signor Boni, Dr. E. Steinmann, and other eminent authorities, who laid down for themselves the great principle, as a starting point, that no retouching or so-called restoring of any kind should be allowed, and nothing done beyond cleaning from dust and securely fixing dangerous pieces. From so wise a beginning the best results were likely to follow. Cecconi Principi and Giovanni Cingolani were appointed to begin experimentally. On the death of Leo XIII., Pius X. ordered the continuation of the work. First of all, wherever it was found that the *intonaco* was coming away a liquid mixture of powdered chalk and *pozzolana* was injected behind it to reunite it with the ground, the most dangerous points being first fixed with *scagliola*. The process was tenderly continued till the fresco in the neighbourhood no longer sounded hollow. It was found that the great transversal crack, which Heath Wilson on the evidence of a photographer believed to have been merely painted there by Michelangelo<sup>1</sup>—a belief since repeated more than once—was a genuine and mischievous crack. This and lesser cracks were stopped with a mixture of wax and pitch, and the surface of the work being thus made sound was carefully cleaned with bread. It was found that the frescoes had been retouched in colour by one of the 'restorers' at some time. The spots which we see somewhat plentifully in parts are due to this cause. The bulk of this colour has vanished, leaving merely little islets. It would have been dangerous to attempt to remove these. One can only hope that the wise treatment of these frescoes on this last occasion will inaugurate a new epoch in the handling both of these and other works of art when repair is needed.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the thought that will strike us most is the fine condition on the whole of these frescoes, considering the four hundred years of risk through which they have passed. That condition is mainly due to the sound and simple method—the old-fashioned fresco method which he had seen in Ghirlandaio's studio as a boy—which he employed, and to the direct and bold handling, with a minimum of retouches, with which he applied it. It is inevitable that in four hundred years the colour of fresco should fade and the surface suffer some injury. The processes of cleaning employed in the past

<sup>1</sup> In a letter to the *Burlington Magazine*, October 1908, Dr. Ernst Steinmann finally disposes of this extraordinary belief.

<sup>2</sup> The account is taken from Dr. Ernst Steinmann's *Die Sixtinische Kapelle*, 11. München, 1905.



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have left their traces, and abrasions are visible in many places, sometimes over large spaces, but the broad and plastic style of the whole treatment has survived the evil days far better than the richer and more complicated colouring of the Tuscan painters on the walls below.



Michelangelo

THE FALL AND THE EXPULSION



EVE

*Sistine, Rome*



## CHAPTER XI

### MEANINGS IN THE VAULT

**I**T seemed well in the last chapter to set forth the drier facts concerning the painting of the great vault before turning to its design and meaning. Of these facts we must select three to take along with us. First, that Michelangelo when he designed the frescoes was just thirty-three years old, in the very prime of his craftsmanship and power of thought. Secondly, that the whole design was completed in his brain in an incredibly short space of time—hardly more than a few weeks, allowing of course some slight subsequent modifications of detail. And this fact is most vital to our understanding of the great scheme of the vault, since it results from it that we have unity and completeness of conception throughout the design, every part of it becoming complementary to the rest and to the whole. Thirdly, that this is the only great design which fate permitted Michelangelo to carry through to its end according to his first conception, or indeed at all. We must, I am persuaded, put away from us at starting the idea that any portion of it was placed there—except, of course, the architectural ornament—from the mere desire to fill a space, or indulge in a piece of draughtsmanship apart from a meaning connecting itself with the whole purpose, even though we cannot see or explain to ourselves what the exact meaning is.

The curved surface of the barrel vaulting, very flat in section and running from end to end of the chapel, is used for the great narrative series, divided into four large compartments and five smaller, which carry with them the great meaning of the whole design—an allegory of the Life of Man, expressed in the contest between the great moral forces, Light and Darkness, Righteousness and Sin, the Spirit of Good and the Spirit of Evil, of God and of Satan, which in their workings govern and make up the sum of all human life and human action. Beginning (Plate xxxiii.) from the end just over the high altar they range as follows: 1 (small panel), 'God separates the Light from the Darkness'; 2 (large compartment), double subject—(a) 'Creation of

## MICHELANGELO

the Sun and Moon,' (b) 'Creation of Plants'; 3 (small), 'Creation of the Firmaments'; 4 (large), 'Creation of Adam'; 5 (small), 'Creation of Eve'; 6 (large), double subject—(a) 'The Temptation,' (b) 'The Expulsion'; 7 (small), 'Noah's Sacrifice'; 8, 'The Flood'; 9, 'Noah's Drunkenness.' At each of the four corners where the union of the vaulting with the lower walls produces a large triangular space is a subject from Jewish history. The pair at the altar end represent—(1) 'The Brazen Serpent'; (2), 'The Death of Haman'; and at the other end, (3) 'Judith and Holofernes'; and (4) 'David and Goliath.'

Seated on painted pedestals below each of the five smaller main subjects are on either side pairs of nude youthful figures—known by the not very satisfactory name of 'Athletes,' four to each panel, or twenty in all.<sup>1</sup> They act as supporters to ten circular medallions which are placed between them. Below each of these pairs of figures, in the oblongs which occur between the triangular spaces over the windows, is the colossal figure of a prophet or sibyl. There are seven Prophets and five Sibyls, expressing the well-known belief that the sibyls, like the prophets, foretold the coming to earth of a Great Redeemer. Each Sibyl or Prophet has one, or sometimes two, attendant children—the spirits of inspiration; an idea which occurs, as we have already seen, in the pulpit of Giovanni Pisano at Pistoia, and elsewhere. On either side, too, of each Prophet or Sibyl, beneath the painted pedestals which support the 'Athlete' figures, a pair of children on each pedestal act as 'Atlantes' or 'Caryatides,' bearing up the cornice projection. Over each window the spring of the vaulting produces a triangular space, eight in all, the base of each triangle resting on the semicircular lunette about the round head of the window. Triangles and lunettes are filled, the former with groups, the latter with pairs of seated figures, all of which are commonly described as 'Ancestors of Christ,' because above each window-head is painted a tablet bearing one, two, or three of the names which occur in the genealogy of the Virgin Mary. Both Condivi and Vasari thus describe them. But if their interpretation be right it must be so only in the most general sense, for it is quite impossible to connect the names which appear on the tablets with the figures above and at the sides of them. The groups in the triangles are in all cases domestic scenes, and in seven instances out of eight they portray a father and mother with a child or children in various attitudes of

<sup>1</sup> All but the head and one foot of the figure above the 'Delphic Sibyl' fell away in the explosion of 1798, and has been wisely left in bare plaster.



THE OFFERING OF NOAH





*Sicilia, Rome*

THE FLOOD

## MEANINGS IN THE VAULT

activity or weariness, wakefulness or sleep. In the eighth instance a woman sits with a fixed impassive countenance, looking out from the picture into dreary space, the man's head behind her dimly seen with drooping eyes—childless, or having lost their child. These eight scenes give us human life in the family, with its joys and sorrows. The seated figures in the lunettes on either side of each window are single figures, sometimes accompanied by children and sometimes not, and seem to carry out again something of the same vision of life as the groups in the triangles; but amongst them we can discern several which seem to typify the ordinary occupations and phases of life. Women nurse their babies, another rocks her cradle, another curls her hair, others seem to be teaching children at their knees, while one looks with a wanton air aside from hers as if in neglect of her duties. One winds the yarn for spinning, another seems to dip her hands into a plate; a scholar sits with his leg outstretched across a stool, his book before him; a woman behind him gazes steadily at what seems to be a sculptured head which she holds in her hands; another man, perhaps a poet, is eagerly writing something on a parchment. In one place is a man lazily asleep, in another a man is buried in thought; in another an old man leans upon his staff, his life's usefulness ended. Lastly, in the spandrels formed by each triangular space with the rectangular lines of the frame in which they are enclosed, there are seen in semi-obscurity the forms of nude figures resting on the slopes of the triangles, lurking as it were in the dark corners.

This is not, then, a mere set of noble illustrations to the Book of Genesis, and the history of the Jews, with the Prophets and Sibyls to support it, and a large number of nude and draped figures thrown in because Michelangelo wanted them where he put them; neither is it, as it has been described, a Hymn of Praise, though it may arouse in us feelings akin to such a hymn. But it is a great allegory of Human Life, with original darkness and enlightenment from God, its sin and degradation, its hope of a redemption proclaimed all along the ages by prophets and sibyls—all pointing to the Christ who is to come.

We have, then, in the carrying out of this idea, first the 'Spirit of God brooding over the face of the waters'; the 'Creation of Light and Darkness' with the culmination in the 'Creation of Adam' in the image of God, followed by the 'Creation of Eve.' Here we have man in his nobility enlightened by the spirit of God. Then follows Sin, with its effect upon man—the 'Temptation' and 'Fall'; the

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'Expulsion';<sup>1</sup> the 'Offering of Noah' to typify man's effort in his fallen state after unity with God; the 'Deluge,' and after it the 'Degradation of Noah,' indicating the helplessness of man, even of good man, without the second enlightening—that is the Redeemer. The subjects in the four great triangles are typical of the struggle of the godlike in man, as typified by the Jewish race, triumphing over the bestial; 'Mordecai over Haman'; Moses over the poisonous reptiles by means of the brazen serpent (not without a looking backward to the serpent of the fall, and a looking forward through its symbolical meaning to the Crucifixion); 'David triumphing over Goliath,' one of the most favourite of Renaissance symbols—as favourite as the 'Battle of the Lapithae and Centaurs' with the sculptors of Hellas, and with something of the same meaning; 'Judith destroying Holofernes'—again not without its allusion to the overthrow of tyrannies which cramp the human spirit. All these from first to last give us in narrative the great struggle between good and evil, God and Satan, the godlike and the bestial in man.

Beneath the nine great subjects in the main ceiling we have, as we have said, twenty nude figures, nobly beautiful, and in the pride of youth and strength, on whom the name (which I must use under protest) of 'Athletes' has been bestowed. Taken as a whole they are amongst Michelangelo's creations the most beautiful, in the sense that none are so instinct with that sense of beauty of form and line which in many of the master's creations is overweighted by his sense of strength, the *terribilità*, which impresses us from another cause. In the whole range of art can be found no instance in which the beauty and dignity of the human form are cast in a mould more grand than in the two figures placed respectively above the left of the prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah. These take us back indeed to the figures of the pediment of the Parthenon, but are not surpassed by them. They present us with humanity under its noblest physical type, and I cannot doubt that they were placed here, immediately under the great series which tells us of the early morning of the world, to express the glorious physical beauty of Life as it sprang into being under the hand of the Creator—types of Life in its first essence, in its noble, unconscious nudity. They are complementary to the great series above of the creation and dawn of man's life upon the earth, just as

<sup>1</sup> Vasari and Condivi call these the 'Sacrifice of Cain and Abel,' which in point of order it ought to be, but an examination of the subject shows that Michelangelo intended it to be the 'Sacrifice of Noah.'





THE DRUNKENNESS OF NOAH

100. 20



JEREMIAS

*Sistine, Rome*

## MEANINGS IN THE VAULT

the groups in the triangles and lunettes, lower down between the prophets and the sibyls, carry out the idea of man's ordered life and occupation in the family and in the community, guarded and bounded by the prophets and law in a later development of civilisation. These young figures are full of the physical beauty and joy of life: they have no occupation; need none beyond the delight of being alive. They hold indeed, if that can be called an occupation or further reason of their being, each pair, a medallion or shield between them, while several of the pairs support between them garlands of huge acorns and oak leaves. These are commonly said to be there as an allusion to the family 'stemma' of Julius—the della Rovere oak. And no doubt that is so, though I cannot but believe that there is further in the master's mind a thought of that golden age when man was young upon the earth, and when the acorns of Dodona were greater in size than now. In any case, whether this be so or not, the presence of the bearers of the medallions seems to sound the one note which comes to us in the whole series from the life of natural man—the man as he comes direct from Nature—on earth.<sup>1</sup> These supporters of the medallions seem to represent to us the Physical beauty of life, as the groups below represent its Moral order. It is perhaps natural to hope, since these figures are set in pairs beneath each of the five smaller panels, that we might be able to trace in each case direct connection with the subject which they adorn. This perhaps is so in the pair of figures above the prophet Jeremiah, and beneath the panel of the 'Separation of Light from Darkness.' Here the light seems to fall strongly upon the calm and majestic figure on the left, while the figure on the right in a contorted position seems to turn his face away from the light, his body being thrown into deep shadow. So too the pair below, the 'Separation of the Firmaments,' seem to be turning aside as if unable to gaze upon the presence of the Almighty. But in most cases the attempt eludes us. We must, I think, be content to see in the presence of these noble forms rather a general connection with the great thought of the Creation, than a precise connection of each pair with its adjoining subject.

Beneath the projecting pedestals on which the feet of these figures

<sup>1</sup> The subject of the medallions, which are difficult to decipher from below, are identified as (1) the 'Murder of Abner'; (2) 'Death of Uriah'; (3) 'Nathan's Parable'; (4) 'Death of Absalom'; (5) 'Abraham and Isaac'; (6) 'Death of Joram'; (7) 'Overthrow of Baal's Altar'; (8) 'Ahab's Destruction'; (9) 'Translation of Elijah.'



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rest, we find to each pedestal a pair of children who act as 'Caryatides' to support the cornice above. The temptation to consider these as mere artistic adjuncts void of direct meaning has driven out the lesson which should have been taught by the design for the Tomb of Julius, which we should remember was put forth from Michelangelo's brain only a year or two before this. And just as in that Tomb no single feature in the first design was inserted aimlessly, or as an artist's caprice, or in fault of any more vital idea—so also in this Sistine design we may assure ourselves that there is no part that did not in the artist's mind, though we fail to fathom it, carry out and lead up to the great dominating thought of the whole. Just as the figures above express the physical beauty and splendour of adult life as it came from the hand of God, so these *putti* below express the joy and beauty of child life. They build up and support, and as it were grow into, the mature life above them.

The great range of seven Prophets and five Sibyls who sit between the triangles, colossal in size and majestic in treatment, represent to us the hopes and the looking forward of the world, Jewish and Pagan, to the coming of a new creation, a second Adam in the person of a Redeemer of the race—the hope proclaimed to the Jewish world by the Prophets, to the Pagan world, according to old tradition, by the Sibyls. These figures coming just beneath the 'Athletes' (whom I would call the 'Types of Physical Life') and just between the groups of the 'Ancestors of Christ,' which present us with the scenes of well-ordered daily life under moral law, bind together the great scheme of the design into one majestic whole.

It only remains to speak of the dimly seen figures that lie in the shadows of the spandrels above the triangular groups. Some of these are dignified of pose, but others again are of unrestful and more ignoble attitude. They suggest to us the ignobler phases of human life, not all of them without some half-seen attraction of beauty, which shrink from the light and haunt the dark corners of the earth and of man's existence. They are, it will be noticed, in juxtaposition with, but also in strong contrast to, the scenes of worthy life in the triangles beneath. These too are complementary to the great chapter of life.

For the sake of bringing together without too distant separation the component parts which thus form the unity of the design, I have so far dwelt little on the treatment, ideal or artistic, of the individual subjects. There are, as has been said, some hundred and forty-five



SIBYLLA PERSICA

*Sistine, Rome*





SIBYL OF CUMÆA

*Sistine, Rome*



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subjects in all, great and small, composed of not far short of four hundred figures. It is impossible in a book of this size to do more than select a very few of the more important passages in this wondrous work—every portion of which, though not of equal excellence, beauty, or impressiveness, is yet worthy of close study if space allowed it. In the great series of nine Old Testament subjects on the plane of the ceiling, the first five nearest to the altar required the representation either by symbol or personification of the presence of the Almighty. It demanded both courage and reverence to treat them as he did. He chose to represent the Almighty under the personification of a man. In doing this he only followed the example of the Book of Genesis itself, of the Psalms, of the Book of Job, or indeed of the whole Bible, where human imagery is made to present to our minds that which could by no other means be presented to it.<sup>1</sup> But in the doing of it the dividing line between reverence and irreverence, dignity and unworthiness, is easy to overstep, and, as many an instance in Italian art will tell us, was often overstepped. To take refuge in pure symbol was the reverent expedient of many of the earlier men. To Michelangelo pure symbol meant, as we have seen before, symbol expressed in terms of the human body—now become to him as much the symbol in which his thought expressed itself, as words and language to a poet. And we shall again fail to understand the man and his methods if we do not grasp the truth, that throughout this great work the facts, moral and physical, of man's relation to his Creator are without exception expressed through the human form. In subjects which deal with the Creation, most painters, perhaps one may say any painter but he, would have given us pictures full of the outward forms of life other than man's—waves and water, trees and plants, birds and beasts—all so tempting as accessories, all costing so little as explanations. But you may hunt these frescoes through and you will find but a few scant, almost unavoidable instances in which any form whatever save that of man has been employed. In the 'Creation of Plants' a mere spray of fern upon a jutting rock; a great coloured circle for the sun; a withered, leafless tree in the 'Deluge'; a stump of another tree in the 'Creation of Adam,' and a tree with one side bearing leafage and fruit in the 'Temptation'; the head of an ox and a fallen sheep in the 'Sacrifice of Noah';

<sup>1</sup> Michelangelo began at the end farthest from the altar, reversing the chronological order, and employed on the subjects at that end a smaller scale, which he gradually increased, the Creation of Adam representing the larger scale which he employed at the end nearest the altar.

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some snakes in the 'Brazen Serpent'; and a few wreaths of colossal oak-leaves among the 'Athletes'—these are the sweeping together of such few natural forms as are to be found in the whole of that vast work, but they are a rich harvest compared to the sum total of that which we shall find in his later works.

He is content therefore to exert all the force of his imagination on the form of symbolic expression which is most natural to him and which finds its warrant in the incomparable poetry of the Bible itself. Nothing can be more reverent, more awe-inspiring than the majestic forms under which he has symbolised the Creator in the acts of creation. It is perhaps the one instance which one could quote in which failure has not been the fate of an artist who has dared so much. In the 'Creation of Adam' (Plate xxxvii.), we shall at once be struck by the fact that the figure is less wrapt in mystery, and more distinctly displayed in the form of man than in the three previous scenes. And this is done of intention to bring into clearness the painter's idea of the creation of man in the image of the Creator, the two forms visibly approximating. In all the other scenes of creation the figure of the Almighty is wrapped in a mantle. The figure of Adam is of incomparable beauty. A look of ineffable, unfathomable yearning is on the face as the finger of God touches his, and wakes him into life. The moment chosen is that of the awakening. He still lies upon the ground. A few moments hence and he will stand erect as man upon the earth. Yet the statuesque treatment of the figure—which once more makes one think of the 'Theseus' of the Parthenon—seems to remove it from the region of mere fleshly humanity just enough to make the Creation in the image of God less of a paradox. In the panel next to it, of the 'Creation of Eve' (Plate xxxix.), Michelangelo has frankly adopted the motive and treatment of one of the greatest of his precursors, Jacopo della Quercia. The year before the commencement of the Sistine design, it will be remembered, had been spent by the sculptor in his workshop at Bologna, hard by San Petronio, whose glorious portal by the older Siènese master was daily before his eyes. The influence of Quercia's robust and dignified art upon Michelangelo is quite unmistakable. Here, however, it is less a case of influence than of the adoption of a motive in its entirety—a practice fully sanctioned by many an example in Italian art, and reckoned not as a plagiarism or imitation, but rather as a tribute of admiration. No man is less liable to be charged with plagiarism than Michelangelo, yet we find continual echoes, in



DANIEL

*Sistine, Rome*





SIBYLLA LIBYCA

*Sistine, Rome*

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his work, of motives already used by older men. They do honour both to him and to them. In this subject of the 'Creation of Woman,' Eve rises from the side of sleeping Adam, her eyes, with wonder in them, upraised to the Creator; her hands reverently joined before her, as she steps, the last work of perfected creation, into this new world 'so great, so wonderful.' The form is cast in large and ample mould—the *magna mater* of mankind. Naturally she is made to be the central figure, as she is the central interest of the group, Adam being, perhaps of intention, less supreme in his beauty than in the previous subject.

At this point the perfecting of man by the spirit of the Creator has been fulfilled. It is the central panel of the nine. And from this point also begins the day of power for the conflicting influence of evil. The double subject of the 'Temptation' and 'Expulsion' (Plate XL.) balances the 'Creation of Man,' and for beauty and grandeur may rank with it. The figures here, however, as befits the subject, are, especially in the left-hand group of the man and woman beneath the tree of knowledge, less sculpturesque and nearer to the humanity of flesh and blood than in the Adam of the 'Creation.' It is noticeable that the man is made to stretch out his hand to pluck the fruit for himself. Noticeable, too, that the tree in full leaf is the only one which occurs in the whole range of the painting or sculpture of the master. The two figures in the 'Expulsion' are commonly compared with those of the same subject by Masaccio in the Carmine and are thought to have been inspired by him. This may be so; and we know of Michelangelo's early admiration for the master. But in this case the necessity for two nude figures under similar circumstances may be sufficient cause for the resemblance which seems to connect these two grand versions in our mind.

The 'Sacrifice of Noah' (Plate XLII.), is on the whole the least interesting and impressive subject of the series. Since it is placed before the 'Deluge' it can hardly be the sacrifice which we read of as offered in thanksgiving after the subsiding of the water, but rather an offering before the entry to the ark, leading up to the next great subject of the 'Deluge' (Plate XLIII.) itself. I have already mentioned that Michelangelo painted the nine great subjects in reversed chronological order, beginning them with the 'Drunkenness of Noah,' and that as he proceeded he saw reason greatly to increase the scale of his figures, while, of necessity, he reduces the number of figures in the composition. In the 'Deluge,' the second which he painted, this reduction has not taken

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place, and we have a large and somewhat scattered composition in which over fifty figures, great and small, are introduced. This number allows of the breaking up of the subject into many minor groups and many minor incidents which, full of pathetic detail and treated with a full measure of human sympathy, make up a most moving picture. There is no fury of action, and no violent expression of the brutal and selfish passions which such disaster calls out from the baser sort of men. On the contrary, the keynote is one of tender human affection and devotion. Mothers cling to their infants; a husband carries a wife on his shoulders; a young man bears in his arms a lifeless form which he has rescued from the water; the father and mother stretch out their hands towards it. The spirit which pervades the picture is one of compassion and sympathy. It seems to proclaim—and this is probably the painter's meaning—that humanity even in its debasement and submersion retains the saving nobility of the affections; just as in the next picture, the 'Drunkenness of Noah,' it seems to proclaim that even in the good—for he clearly takes Noah as his type of the good—the degradation lies dangerously near the surface. In the 'Deluge' the composition of the groups in the left-hand lower angle, with the sloping line of fugitives ascending to their last forlorn vantage ground, is extremely fine. In the 'Drunkenness of Noah' it is notable that for the figure of Noah the master gives us an echo of the figure of the Adam in the 'Creation,' and this not as a mere artistic preference, but clearly with a meaning which cannot be missed.

Grand as is the treatment of this great series which covers the upper plane of the ceiling, it becomes clear to us as we review the majestic figures of the Prophets and Sibyls in the lower range of the vaulting, that it is in these that Michelangelo displays himself in his deepest personality. It may be granted—I think it must be granted—that all attempts to analyse the deepest feeling and meaning which underlay the creation of these mysterious figures in the mind of their designer, must end in a very unsatisfying measure of success, and must leave their hidden depths still unfathomed. They affect us as a great sonata affects us, setting in motion in us feelings that else would remain unstirred, but we cannot gauge them nor express them to ourselves in language. It is no proof that a mighty conception in Art, or Music, or Poetry has no true meaning to you, because you cannot tell another nor yourself what that meaning is.

There are seven Prophets and five Sibyls. The meaning of their presence here is, on the surface, a very obvious one. We have





JONAS

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already alluded to it. There was a very ancient tradition that the Sibyls had foretold the coming of a Redeemer to the Pagan world as the Prophets to the Jewish world. These twelve figures are the great and solemn chorus of witnesses to the coming of a Redeemer to the human race whose creation, fall, suffering, and ultimate degradation, are recorded above them. That is obvious enough. It is when we endeavour to read, in each individual figure of Sibyl or Prophet, the thoughts in the artist's mind which inspired their creation, that we are compelled—and it is wisest—to interpret, each one of us for ourselves, the meaning as it appeals to us. Reference to their writings does not always force them to yield up their secret to us. We may readily catch up the more superficial connections which present themselves. It is easy to see why 'Jonah' should be painted as a nude, with the symbolic fish beside him, and a spray of gourd leafage above him: why Daniel (Plate XLVIII.) should be young and fair of countenance: why the Cumæan Sibyl (Plate XLVII.), traditionally oldest amongst Sibyls, should be the majestic figure wrinkled with the suns of far antiquity: why of the rest the Sibyl Delphica (Plate XCVII.) should gaze out with innocent wide eyes: why Ezekiel (Plate XCIII.) turns aside in an attitude of inspired frenzy: and why Jeremiah<sup>1</sup> (Plate XLV.) sits pensive, buried in deep melancholy. Here again we are dealing with the obvious. It is easy enough too, from the mere artistic aspect, to trace here and there the original source of some motive, or the connection of some pose with others which occur in other works of the artist. We can, for instance, remind ourselves that the motive of the inspiring children who whisper into the ears of the Sibyls, is one which has been used by Giovanni Pisano; that the portion of the foot and knees in the Joel is that which he used in the Moses; that the head of the Cumæan Sibyl is a memory of Dante; that the Putti on either side of the Daniel make us think of Donatello; always again the obvious and the trivial. The depths themselves lie lower down.

When in the late December days of 1512 the vault of the Sistine was finished and the scaffold cleared away, Michelangelo had just heard of the downfall of his great bronze statue at Bologna, and Julius himself had but a month or two to live.

<sup>1</sup> The Jeremiah was probably the last painted of all the prophets. Dr. Steinmann has seen reason to think that we have in it, if not something like a portrait of Michelangelo himself, yet a form inspired by reference to his own condition, worn out by physical distress and disappointment, and deeply conscious, like Jeremiah, that few or none would understand his work. His letters about this time are very plaintive.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE FAÇADE OF SAN LORENZO

THE early period of the master's life showed him in the Casa Medici, the table-companion of the sons of Lorenzo. Twenty years have passed since that time. Piero, the eldest, ended his worthless life in 1503, drowned in the river Liris (Garigliano). Giuliano the youngest, now Count of Nemours, was alive but in ill-health. He married Philiberta of Savoy in 1514 and died shortly after; but Giovanni, made a cardinal at thirteen, became Pope at the death of Julius, in March 1513. There should, at first sight, have been everything to hope for Michelangelo's art, but the renewal of the relationship between the old messmates was with results far more disappointing than that which had existed between Julius and the master. In the year of the old Pope's death came the renewal of the contract for the Tomb, and Michelangelo worked on it for a time, probably using this first period of freedom which had been given to him since 1506, to bring forward the statue of Moses. But two years later, on November 30, 1515, Leo made his first entry as Pope to his native town in great splendour. It was during this visit that Leo resolved to add a façade to San Lorenzo, the Medici Church, which Brunelleschi had left unfinished at his death, and in the condition in which we see it to-day. Vasari states that Raffaello d'Urbino, Baccio d'Agnolo, Antonio da Sangallo (he means Giuliano) and Andrea and Jacopo Sansovino all prepared designs, but that of Michelangelo was preferred. The latter had entered the field with no great readiness, but when once the task was assigned to him he threw himself into it with great enthusiasm, determined, as he said, to make it the very mirror of architecture. It was his first essay in this art, but we must remember that here the addition of a façade to an already existing building did not demand the structural power which his later achievements, such as the Cupola of St. Peter's, required. Here he was rather called upon to produce a facing of marble with architectural features adapted to the receipt of sculpture, a task well within the



FIGURE TO RIGHT OF PERSICA

*Sistine, Rome*



FIGURE TO RIGHT OF JEREMIAS

*Sistine, Rome*

X



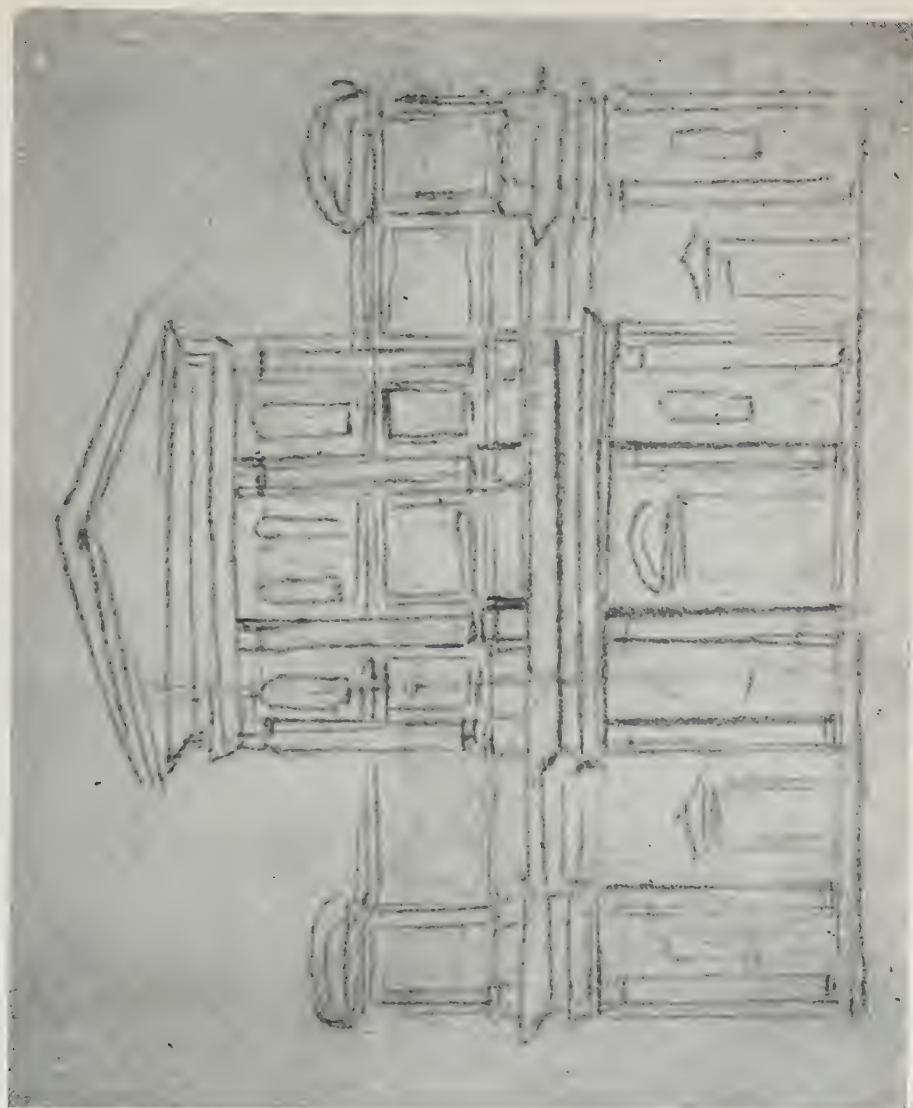
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power of a sculptor. The actual contract was not signed till 1518, but from 1516 to 1520 he was continually at the quarries of Carrara and Serravezza. He makes a model of the façade and despatches it to Rome by mule. Then, the contract being actually signed by which he is to complete the façade in eight years from February 1, 1518 for a sum of 40,000 broad ducats, he buys a piece of land from the Chapter of Sta. Maria del Fiore for the carrying on of the work, and is soon back again at Carrara. It is not necessary to weary the reader with the details of the four years during which Michelangelo was called upon by Leo to act as contractor, clerk of the works, foreman, and paymaster to the marble-cutting business before this ill-fated project was finally thrown over by the Pope. It is enough to say that Michelangelo had for some time had to do these duties at Carrara. It was represented to the Pope that marble could be obtained at Pietra Santa and Serravezza on Tuscan territory to the great advantage of Florence. Michelangelo rightly or wrongly mistrusted the quality of the marble from these quarries, but received a peremptory letter to employ them; finds himself regarded as an enemy by the people of Carrara thenceforth, and likewise by those whose interests lay at Serravezza; is forced to make a road by which the marbles may be brought down; to construct shears by which the columns may be lowered to the boats—one of which shears gives way through the fault of a rascally ironworker, to the peril of the master's life and ruin of the column. He is driven to distraction by the jobberies, knaveries, incompetence of officials and workmen, and finally in 1520 receives the order from Leo to abandon the design. Small wonder if he wrote and spoke bitterly of his Medici patron and the way in which he had treated him. In the bitterness of his soul he wrote that Leo had employed him as a mere pretence to keep him from the Tomb of Julius. In a letter to Sebastiano del Piombo he tells him sorrowfully how they have suspended the work and are using the columns for Sta. Maria del Fiore. He says that he has received 2300 ducats and has expended 1800 at Carrara, Serravezza, and Florence. He says that he makes no count of his model made nor of his years of wasted time; nor that he was ruined by this same San Lorenzo; nor of his torments, annoyances, chagrins; nor of the expenses of his home in Rome going to wrack and ruin in his absence. For all of which there remain in his hands the 500 ducats of the balance. Truly, if Julius died in debt to Michelangelo, Leo died in debt to the whole world for four of the very best years of the artist's

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life squandered in this unworthy manner. And so passed the ill-fated project for the façade of San Lorenzo, leaving behind it no visible sign save one great marble column which lay till within the last twenty years in the Piazza in front of the church amongst the booths and stalls of the hucksters who from the days of Michelangelo, and even before that, had made the place their haunt.

I do not propose to deal exhaustively with a work which never came into existence, but a short notice is necessary, if for no other reason, because it emphasises Michelangelo's position in architecture at this stage of his career. It is essential to our understanding of that position that we should grasp the fact at the outset that Michelangelo was a sculptor by training and not an architect, and that he did in the first instance approach architecture from the sculptor's point of view rather than from the structural point of view. The structure of San Lorenzo had been completed by Brunelleschi. The façade, unfinished by him, was a bare expanse of brickwork whose elevation, corresponding exactly to the shape of the nave, aisles, and shallow side-chapels within, presents a central gable, very obtuse in its angle, with sloping pent-roofs, very flat in pitch, attached on either side. To this Michelangelo proposed to attach his façade, and so far as we gather from two sketch designs which are preserved, and from the details given in the contract, this façade was to have been little more than a marble surface prepared for the receipt of sculpture, and divided by columns, niches, pedimented doorways, panels, and recesses. But it would, when once applied to the face of the building, not only have failed to express the structure which lay behind it, it would have totally concealed the shape of it, and would have given a wholly false impression of its character. It would, in fact, have been a rectangular wall resting on another wall of different shape—so different indeed, that the overlapping portions, if one may so describe them, of the square marble façade would have stood in the air as screens. It is true that this defect, not easily pardoned by those who hold to the principle that ornament and structure should never contradict one another, is shared to some extent by many other churches which preceded this in the history of the Renaissance—such as Leon Battista Alberti's façade of the Novella, the same artist's temple at Rimini, and many another example in which the front is untrue in more or less degree to the structure behind. The defect belongs even to earlier buildings, such as the façades of the Duomo of Orvieto, and of Siena. It is of Italian rather than of Italian Renaissance origin. But it would be difficult to quote an instance



*Casa Buonarroti*

SKETCH FOR FAÇADE OF SAN LORENZO





SKETCH FOR FAÇADE OF SAN LORENZO

*Casa Buonarroti*

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before this date where the method was carried so far as in the proposed façade of San Lorenzo. The designs which had been prepared by Giuliano da Sangallo, some four or five in number, had shown less of this defect, though on other grounds we need not regret their rejection. That rejection by Leo and the Cardinal was certainly not due to scruples as to the violation of a great architectural principle which had for them no existence, but merely to the fact that Michelangelo was likely to produce a façade which would better accommodate the sculptural adornments with which he proposed to fill it—a façade, in short, after the taste of the day, carried out by the greatest genius of the day. That, too, is the sense in which we must understand Michelangelo's enthusiastic promise that he would make the façade of San Lorenzo the mirror of architecture in Italy. He should have said, of sculpture.

When we have said this, however, we shall have said the most that can be said against the ill-fated façade. The two sketches which survive—the wooden model in the Accademia at Florence is probably not by Michelangelo—are both of them simple, dignified, and well-proportioned designs of their type. In each case the three portals, which we see in the brick façade to-day, are represented by doorways surmounted by angular or bowed pediments. These three doorways, of which the central is the largest, are separated by double columns of Tuscan Doric having a space for a niche between each pair, while similar pairs of columns are placed at the two extremities of the façade. There are thus in the lower range eight columns in all, with four spaces niched for the receipt of statues. The columns support a deep entablature dividing the lower range from the range above. These features are common to both designs, which differ, however, from that point upwards. In the one we get a range about half the height of the lower divided into oblong panels or recesses. The central portion rises, with four columns corresponding in position to those of the lower order, into a pedimented temple front again, furnished with niches and recesses for statues and reliefs. This design follows far more nearly than the other the shape of the building behind it. The other design presents nearly the same features so far as the central portion is concerned, but the flanking portions in this case rise to the same level as the entablature of the centre. Thus there is a large space of surface behind which no building whatever occurs, and which would have had to be supported by some form of hidden buttress. In the contract, the number of statues to be provided with the reliefs, some in bronze

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and some in marble, the number of columns, niches, and the general arrangement are set forth at some length. The impression left upon the mind after reading this document is that Michelangelo had once more undertaken a task too vast to give hope of its accomplishment in such a space of time as eight years—the period allotted. Even if Leo had not broken off the contract when he did, the project would probably have added one more to the list of great undertakings left unfinished by the master.

While Michelangelo was engaged upon the harassing tasks which the project of the façade imposed upon him, he was still hampered by his old obligations to the Tomb of Julius, and even, though this responsibility seemed always to sit more lightly upon him, of his commission for the Piccolomini statues. Nevertheless, in 1514 he signed a contract in Rome with Bernardo Cencio, canon of St. Peter's, and Metello and Mario Vari, to furnish a life-sized statue of 'Christ bearing the Cross,' for the church of the Minerva. This work was forthwith begun, but, as we learn from a letter written by Metello Vari some years later, a flaw showing itself in the marble, the sculptor put it aside, and eventually, but at what date is not shown, began the statue a second time. In 1521, the statue, not completely finished, was sent from Florence to Rome in the charge of Pietro d'Urbino, who was trusted with the task of finishing the hair, the hands, and the feet. A few weeks later Sebastiano del Piombo wrote to say that Pietro had made a lamentable mess of his task—that he had hacked the hair and mutilated the feet. He added that he, the writer, had put the statue into the hands of one Frizzi—an honest man of whom we know no more. This sculptor did his best to end the mischief, refusing more than a few ducats in payment, and a month or two later the statue was placed where we now see it, in a chapel to the left of the choir of the Minerva Church (Plate cxxiv.). It is generally known, therefore, as the 'Risen Christ of the Minerva.'

Granting that we are not looking at a work which is entirely from the chisel of the master, and granting that injury has been done to it by the chisel of others, it is still difficult to think of this statue as worthy to be placed in the highest rank of Michelangelo's conceptions. The ideal leaves much to be desired. It approaches rather to the commonplace of Sansovino than to the mysterious sense of greatness which generally belongs even to the least of the master's works. Anatomically and technically it is excellent—except, of course, in those points where Pietro worked his will. But it neither moves nor



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inspires us. It may be doubted whether the master was himself moved or inspired while he wrought it. The addition of a bronze sandal and of a drapery of the very worst description in the same metal, the latter added at a later date because the sculptor had represented the body entirely nude, has made even the fine proportion of the figure difficult to realise. Very much has been said upon this latter point. The sculptor has been charged with irreverence in thus<sup>1</sup> representing the Saviour. Already more than once we have had to show that to the mind of Michelangelo complete nudity implied no sense whatever of irreverence—on the contrary, to him the human figure stood as the most sacred of all sacred symbols. It was, however, a bold step thus to carry his principles to their extreme conclusion, though to himself it probably seemed no boldness. But it was untrue to fact, and therefore for others than himself needed a justification which could hardly be found for it. The case is not parallel to that of the nude figures employed by him in the scenes of the creation. When we come to consider the fresco of the ‘Last Judgment,’ the question will again present itself under somewhat different conditions.

<sup>1</sup> The contract specially stipulates for a figure *ignudo*, but the fact hardly implies that the choice was made by those who gave the commission, though it implies their full assent to this treatment of a subject which they evidently placed in such a position in a spirit of reverence.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE MEDICI TOMBS—1520-1534<sup>1</sup>

**I**T was in the first half of the year 1520 that the Cardinal Giulio dei Medici, on behalf of Pope Leo, withdrew the commission for the façade of San Lorenzo. Meanwhile Leo had conceived another project—probably this very project led him to abandon the other. His nephew Lorenzo, son of Piero, Duke of Urbino, had died in 1519, and Giuliano, Duke of Nemours, Leo's younger brother, had died in 1516. It was nearly thirty years since Lorenzo il Magnifico, Leo's father, had died. No monument had as yet been erected to Lorenzo's memory, nor to that of his brother Giuliano, murdered in the Duomo in the conspiracy of the Pazzi. The older Medici lay all in San Lorenzo: Giovanni Averardo in the old sacristy beneath the tomb in the centre which Donatello and Michelozzo had sculptured: Cosimo lies, 'Pater Patriæ,' beneath the plain slab in front of the steps that lead from the nave to the high altar; and Piero il Gottoso and his brother Giovanni, again in the old sacristy beneath the tomb which Verrocchio had wrought for them. But there the list of the Medici tombs had ended. It was time that like honour should be paid to the later bearers of the name, and since the old sacristy was already crowded, Leo proposed to build a second or new sacristy, which was to receive the monuments and the bones of Lorenzo il Magnifico and his brother Giuliano, of Giuliano, Lorenzo's son, and of Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino. No mention is made at all of Piero the exile—he was already provided for in the bed of the Garigliano. In November of the year in which the project of the façade had fallen to the ground, the Cardinal Giulio negotiated with Michelangelo for the building of this sacristy and for the tombs of the Medici within it. It is characteristic of the man that, deeply sensitive to the injustice which he had suffered, and full of bitterness and reproach against those who had inflicted it on him, he puts it all aside and throws himself at once

<sup>1</sup> An abbreviated pedigree of the Medici family will be found in Appendix IV.

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whole-heartedly into this new project. But it must not be overlooked, and it will not a little help us presently to the understanding of the deep melancholy which is the key-note of the 'Tombs,' that the design for them was created in his brain in days of bitter brooding. It was while he was thus musing that the fire kindled. But for the present it will be wisest to follow the course which I have adopted throughout this book—namely, to trace in outline the history of the work before considering either its conception or its craftsmanship.

No sooner was the contract made than Michelangelo found himself once more at Carrara to arrange for the excavation and transportation of two hundred tons of marble for the interior linings and work of the sacristy and its tombs. Leo and his cousin, the Cardinal Giulio, having doubtless learned something by experience, no longer insisted on the Serravezza marble, and Michelangelo resorted to the Polvaccio quarry,<sup>1</sup> the oldest and best at Carrara. These marbles were conveyed to his workshop in the Via Mozza, now Via San Zanobi, near the Mercato Nuovo. He records the names of his marble-cutters, five out of the six being men of Settignano, but they proved to be of little worth either in skill or honesty. At the same time, a large order was given to the quarries of Fiesole for stone for the building material of the sacristy itself. This portion of the work went forward rapidly, but not so rapidly that Leo was ever permitted to see it. He died suddenly in December 1521, and was succeeded by the honest, earnest, and simple-minded Dutchman, Adrian of Utrecht, whose life, shortened probably by the chagrins and sorrows of his position, ended in 1523, when the Cardinal Giulio dei Medici, was elected Pope under the title of Clement VII. He was the illegitimate son of Giuliano, brother of Lorenzo the Magnificent, born in the year of his father's murder, 1478, and he was therefore three years younger than the sculptor whom he must have known during the years when the latter was an inmate of the Casa Medici. For illegitimacy, which was to be no bar even to the Papacy, could hardly have been a bar to social intercourse in the family. Michelangelo formed great hopes for art from this election—as we see from one of his letters—and the hopes were not unfounded though they were fulfilled, perhaps, in shapes which he would not himself have chosen. At once the new Medici Pope showed his good will towards the sculptor by an offer whose terms are curiously character-

<sup>1</sup> Heath Wilson states that the Polvaccio quarries were in use in Roman times, and that the Column of Trajan was quarried thence.



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istic of the day.<sup>1</sup> The Pope, through Giovanni Francesco Fantucci, anxious to secure the sole claim on Michelangelo's services, proposed to him that he should take minor orders, with the accompanying vow of celibacy, and with a salary of fifty ducats a month. Michelangelo refused the orders and the celibacy (though he was little inclined and still less fitted for marriage), but accepted, at first, the salary. Presently, however, he repented even of that acceptance and preferred to remain free. Clement, like Leo, found him a difficult man for even a pope to handle. Perhaps Michelangelo had in mind his days as foreman excavator at Carrara. For the present, at any rate, he remained obstinate against all efforts to bind him solely to the service of the Pope. When, a few months later, Clement pressed Michelangelo to add to his labours at San Lorenzo the building of a great library for the Laurentian Collection, the sculptor used his privilege as a free man merely to grumble that architecture was not his profession, and then, as he always did, set to upon that design also. But we must postpone our consideration of the library till a later period when we have more fully dealt with the sacristy. The reader must not, however, forget that, in addition to the library and to further cares, the question of the Tomb of Julius, as described in chapter v., weighed heavily on his mind during all the years that he was engaged upon the Medici Tombs. Already, too, in 1524, the designs of these tombs had begun to assume larger and more complicated dimensions. Fantucci wrote to him how, one Sunday in the Belvedere of the Vatican, the talk turning on the monuments, it came about that Clement more than half resolved to add to the four already destined for the sacristy, the tombs of himself and of Pope Leo—six in all. Here was once more a harassing prospect for the sculptor whose general design for the placing of the tombs we may feel sure had from the first been complete in his brain. Already, in 1525, the structural portion of the sacristy cupola was finished and waiting for its lantern. The change of design was little short of disaster. It was obviated presently by the decision of the Pope that his own tomb and that of Leo should go into the Choir of San Lorenzo. But by the end of the year the Pope had conveyed to him, through Fantucci, his wish to erect a colossal figure in the Piazza of San Lorenzo. Michelangelo shows his exasperation at this new

<sup>1</sup> A little later, however, one of the Popes, Paul iv., found it necessary to order that all members of religious orders who were out in the world practising as painters or sculptors should return to their cloister and strictly conform to their vows. Under this order Fra Giovanni da Montorsoli had to return to his convent.

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vexation in strange fashion. He wrote a reply to Fantucci the like of which, it is safe to say, was never before or since received to a pope's proposal. He deluges the scheme with ridicule, suggests the utilising of the lower portion of the statue for a barber's shop, with a horn of plenty for a chimney, while the head, being empty, may be let to a greengrocer. The poor Pope's Colossus was smothered in its cradle. Clement took it forbearingly, even meekly. There is something pathetic in the words of the kind and dignified letter which he presently wrote with his own hands to the sculptor concerning the sacristy. Popes do not live long, he says, and it is his great desire to see, or at least to hear before he dies, of the completion of the sepulchre of his family, and he commends to Michelangelo the use of a holy patience. It must be owned that it was needed. It is very plain that the sculptor was at this time overworked in body and overstrained in mind. The threat of the lawsuit on the part of the heirs of Julius II. hung over him. He might well write that a man cannot do one thing with his hands and another with his mind. It is evident that he was deeply absorbed in the work of the Medici Tombs, while, at the same time, others besides Clement were ready to thrust new commissions upon him: the Duke of Mantua wanted a design for a garden; Cardinal Grimani, Bishop of Aquileia—the patron of Giovanni da Udine—wanted a picture; a tomb was needed for Barbazza in San Petronio at Bologna, and above all the Laurentian Library was something of a millstone about his neck. He was by natural temperament one of those men who find it impossible to work day after day a given number of hours. As with Lionardo da Vinci, and many another man of great activity of brain, there were often periods when his hand was idle—periods which were, perhaps, the most really productive, but during which no visible work was produced. He said himself that often after a fierce day's work upon his marble he needed two or three days' rest. His habit, too, of doing much for himself which others would have left to assistants, added no doubt both to the mental and bodily strain of his work. He seems, during the greater part of the time when he was at work in the sacristy, to have had two assistants, Antonio Mini and Pietro Urbano:—calling in, of course, extra hands when any of the huge blocks had to be moved. But there were few eyes which were privileged to see what went on in the sacristy.

In 1526, Michelangelo summoned to the sacristy the painter and designer, Giovanni da Udine, who was to decorate the vault when it was ready. As Giovanni did not begin his work for another six years,

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this visit was probably arranged merely to give the painter a preliminary idea of the work; but it also seems to point to the fact that Michelangelo at the time believed that he would complete his work at an early date. Giovanni Nanni da Udine had already earned fame for his classical arabesques in the Loggia and other parts of the Vatican; and it is probable that his uncompleted decorations in the sacristy—which are perhaps now under the whitewash—resembled those designs, though it is difficult to think of them in close connection with the Medici Tombs with great satisfaction, except perhaps for the sake of the colour which they added to the cold walls of the chapel. It is strange that we hear of no suggestion that the vault should be decorated by Michelangelo himself. We cannot suppose that Clement forbore to suggest it through unwillingness to put too much upon the sculptor's shoulders: the Library and the Colossus, both suggested after the sacristy had been commenced, are evidences to the contrary. At this time, however, the decorations of the Vatican had created quite a rage for that form of ornament and the selection of Giovanni da Udine possibly represents Clement's own preferences.

For several years after 1526 Michelangelo busied himself in the sacristy which he now used as his workshop, and for a while we lose sight of the work though not of the worker. The year 1528 saw one of the periodical outbreaks of plague in Florence. His brother Buonarroto was stricken, and Michelangelo nursed him tenderly till he died in his arms. His father, now a very old man, was still alive at Settignano. In that same year, the Signoria handed over to the sculptor a block of marble which Baccio Bandinelli was to have made into a 'Hercules and Cacus,' but its future was now altered to a 'Samson slaying a Philistine.' It never took this new shape. After the troublous events presently to be recorded, it went back to Bandinelli, and now stands, a bad piece of work, as 'Hercules and Cacus' once more, in front of the Palazzo Vecchio. But before it got there another struggle of giants had taken place.

In the year 1527 occurred the sack of Rome by the Constable de Bourbon. It was the signal in Florence for immediate revolution against the Medici, represented at the moment by the Duke Alessandro, bastard son of Lorenzo the younger, Duke of Urbino—whose statue at that moment was one of the '*promesse di martello*,' in the sacristy. On the motion of Niccolò Capponi, this 'Mule,'<sup>1</sup> as the

<sup>1</sup> It was not only the Florentine in the street who enjoyed the use of this epithet. A few years earlier his aunt, Clarice dei Medici, wife of Filippo Strozzi, had caused herself to be carried





TOMB OF GIULIANO DEI MEDICI

*San Lorenzo, Florence*



GIULIANO DEI MEDICI (COUNT OF NEMOURS)

*San Lorenzo, Firenze*

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Florentines loved to call him, in allusion to his mother having been a mulatto, was expelled from Florence, but two years later Charles v. and Clement VII. combined to restore the Medici once more, and Florence prepared for siege. Its fortifications were primitive, or non-existing. Michelangelo was called forth from his sanctuary—appointed one of 'the Nine'; sent on a journey of experiment to examine the celebrated defences of Ferrara; to Pisa and the mouth of the Arno that he may repair their defences; is called to Arezzo for a like purpose, but never goes; and above all, constructs a great system of fortifications for the hill of San Miniato above Florence itself. This work, which would have shown us Michelangelo as a military engineer, has not survived. The experts even of that day were not unanimous in its favour, some asserting that it presented too many blanks and embrasures. It would be idle to enter into the question of its technical merits or defects. What is important to us is that his fellow citizens should have had such unbounded belief in his capacities as to entrust him with such a task in the hour of their greatest peril. There is perhaps no better comment on the many-sided powers of this great man than to recall the fact that three commissions which fell to him consecutively were of the following character—the first, to execute a group in sculpture of 'Samson and the Philistines'; the second, to construct the fortifications of San Miniato; and the third, to prepare a design for an altar-piece (commissioned by one of the Malvezzi of Bologna) of the Madonna and Saints to be carried out in oil by Sebastiano del Piombo.

But Michelangelo found the defence of a city not less surrounded by difficulties and annoyances than the building of the tomb of a pope. Niccolò Capponi and Baldassari, members of 'the Nine,' strongly opposed the fortification of San Miniato. Michelangelo was, he thought, interfered with and interrupted, and the work was delayed. He detected treachery in Malatesta Baglioni, the condottiere whom the Council of Ten had selected as their general. And to go no further into an intricate question, on September 21st of that year, 1529, he suddenly disappeared from Florence. Nine days later he was publicly proclaimed a rebel by the Signoria; but before the end of October they had given him a safe-conduct, and on his arrival in Florence late in November, the sentence upon him as a rebel was softened down to exclusion for

to the Casa Medici, and expressed her views to her nephew, Alessandro, in words whose plainness we can forgive for their bravery. The Casa Medici, she told this baseborn debauchee, was no stable for mules.



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three years from the Council. It is characteristic both of the warfare of the day, and the care of the Florentines for their monuments, that he was called upon to protect the Campanile of San Miniato from injury by gunfire, by means of giant woolpacks hung about it. But the treachery of Malatesta, the loss of Francesco Ferrucci, put to death after he had been taken prisoner, the fall of Empoli, and the obvious superiority of the tried troops of Charles v. and the Pope, presently made all resistance hopeless. On August 12, 1530, the Republic of Florence surrendered the town. Alessandro returned to the Casa Medici and Michelangelo's experiment in military engineering was at an end. He had something now to expiate. He had opposed Clement under arms. His enemies in Florence—it is to be feared he had the art of making enemies—accused him of advising the destruction of the Medici Palace, and of a wish to christen the void space, 'The Piazza of the Mules'. The charge was childish, but it may have served. That Michelangelo described the occupants of the palace where he had once known Lorenzo the Magnificent, under Clarice's expressive figure, is likely enough; that he thought for a moment of destroying Michelozzo's masterpiece is out of all possibility. Clement removed the danger, if such it was, and came to the rescue with his pardon. The sculptor was free once more to go back to the work of the sacristy. But whatever he owed to Clement he was not more ready than before to open the doors of his treasure-house to him or to any one of his sending. He was alike obdurate to pope and cardinal, to prince and to courtier. Clement himself, and Figiovanni, Prior of San Lorenzo, besought entry for Cardinal Cibo, but besought in vain. One day the Duke Alessandro—the last perhaps to whom the sculptor would have opened—having heard mass in San Lorenzo with the Viceroy of Naples—tried to get sight of the sacristy and the monuments, but found all the doors barred in the sculptor's absence. He and his guest had to be content with such glimpse as they could get through a window above. But once to Gianbattista Mini, uncle of his helper Antonio, perhaps because he found him more able than other men to enter into the secrets of his heart, he opened the door. Gianbattista's letter to Baccio Valori, of September 29, 1531, describes what he saw. We learn from it that the 'Night' and the 'Dawn,' the female figures, were completed, and the 'Lorenzo' and the 'Madonna' would be finished—if proper accommodation for the sculptor was made—in that same winter. But unless a proper room should be built to take the sculptor and his marble out of the sacristy, where the work was killing

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him, the writer expresses the belief that Michelangelo had but a short time to live. He suffered from headaches—the lifelong legacy of the Sistine Chapel, aggravated by the darkness of the sacristy—and from pains about the heart. This change of room and some satisfactory settlement about the Tomb of Julius which should ease the sculptor's anxiety were Mini's recommendations for keeping Michelangelo alive. Clement, on hearing this, acted with promptitude. He ordered the immediate construction of a well-warmed and lighted room close by. So far for that. The second difficulty he removed in summary fashion, by forbidding Michelangelo, under pain of possible excommunication, to work for any one but himself. Art patrons of that day had weapons at their command other than those of our time. Isabella d'Este clapped once one of her dilatory artists into prison till he got his work done. Clement uses his spiritual authority to ensure the fulfilment of a design which concerned the House of the Medici alone. But without question the action was merciful.

By the light of Mini's invaluable letter we are able to see that Michelangelo's chisel had been employed, up to September 1531, on exactly the figures which in an early letter he had said must be completed by his own hand, namely, the reclining figures on the two sarcophagi, the two seated figures of the 'Capitani,' *i.e.* the younger Lorenzo and Giuliano, and the Madonna which was now placed on the flat stone under which rest the bones of the elder Magnifici, Lorenzo and Giuliano. No sketch, model, or *abozzo* of the tomb for the latter pair is known to exist or to have existed. On the other hand, beneath each of the sarcophagi of the younger 'Capitani' the sculptor had designed a pair of river gods. These appear in several of the early trial drawings, and models for them were actually placed in the sacristy, but they disappeared from sight and knowledge at an early date. What Mini saw in the sacristy—with the exception of these 'Rivers'—differed probably not much from that which we are able to see to-day. In the year and a half which followed his visit the Lorenzo was completed, the Giuliano being left, according to rumour, for Montorsoli to add some work upon—not certainly of great importance, even if the rumour was true. The Madonna may or may not have been further worked upon after Mini saw it, but it remains unfinished to this day. Clement was to die without having seen the sepulchre of his family completed—as a matter of fact he never set eyes upon the Tombs of the Medici.

But long before the pope's death on September 25, 1534, Michelangelo had already lost all interest in the work. Probably he did not

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touch it after the early months of 1533, at latest. From that day forward all persuasion from any source failed to bring him back to the task which he had laid aside. His friend Figiovanni, the Prior of San Lorenzo, besought in vain. Later suppliants, Vasari, Tribolo, Benvenuto Cellini, met with no better success. He left models of the 'Rivers' for Tribolo to complete; possibly, but not certainly, some strokes of the chisel for Montorsoli to add to the 'Giuliano': the two statues of S. Cosmo and S. Damian which we now see on the slab tomb of the Magnifici entirely for Montorsoli and Raffaello di Montelupo to execute; and the walls to Giovanni da Udine to decorate. But so far as Michelangelo was concerned this chapter of his life was closed.

In adding this work, superb in its incompleteness, to the list of the many great projects of this artist's life which were left unachieved by him, we are better able than by any other example to remind ourselves that the whole fault did not lie, as Michelangelo himself was apt to believe, with those who put too much upon him, or who interpolated other more harassing commissions into work already entered upon. It lay also in the special temperament of the man himself, and especially in that very gift of imagination with which he was endowed in so unmeasured a degree. To suggest to Michelangelo a subject was to call up immediately an imaginative scheme of such magnitude as to leave little hope that it could ever be completed before the imagination, having fulfilled its proper task, should get weary of the detail and imperatively demand to be set free. The creative faculty rejoices in creation, but is apt to fall back upon itself when it has satisfied itself. It is, in the case of artists as with other men, by no means always accompanied by the technical powers and the laborious patience which carry the conception to its end. With Michelangelo these same qualities were, however, present to a degree which has seldom if ever been surpassed amongst men of art. He had in those early years, when hard work is not yet labour and sorrow, perfected his technical skill with incredible patience and pains, and he was rewarded by becoming a consummate craftsman at an age when most men are still struggling painfully with their failures. And yet so stupendous—one uses the word of his contemporaries with full acquiescence—was his imaginative power that it speedily outran those other qualities and reached its goal too soon. He learnt very early in his career to become satisfied so soon as he had freed his conception from the marble which enclosed it—or say rather, for that would have been his own account of it perhaps, more and more dissatisfied the farther he got away from his



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idea, into the comparative commonplace of high and conventional finish. It is perhaps hardly quite a just account to say of him, as has been said by very able critics, that he tired of his conceptions and his projects sooner than almost any artist, and returned to them only with the greatest reluctance, or perhaps not at all. One perhaps might more truly say that he, more than any man, found his work finished the moment it had said all it had got to say, and he could not prevail upon himself to add to it 'words, words, words' for the mere sake of oratory. But put it how one will, or assign it to what cause one will, there is no doubt that he did allow the habit to grow upon him (and that before he was forty) of putting aside projects which had been commenced a few years earlier with burning enthusiasm. This had been the fate of the 'Julian Tomb,' whose failure must not be entirely put down to the perversities of fortune, and the stupidities of popes and popes' executors. It was to be the fate of many a less undertaking which we see now as only the noble and mysterious *promesse di martello*. But in no case have we the evidence so fairly before us as in the Medici Tombs—where upon the whole, the way was cleared for him of its obstructions,—that when the great thought which created a design in his mind had expressed itself in its work to him,—which is by no means the same thing as expressing it to all other people,—he could not prevail upon himself to go further with it. Clement, in spite of the 'Colossus' which after all was the vexation of a day, and of the Laurentian Library, to which Michelangelo gave not many months of his time, behaved with consideration in circumstances which he could little understand. The fault did not lie with him, nor even with the executors of Julius, perhaps not with Michelangelo himself, but with Nature, who keeps a specially constructed mould for Genius.

When Michelangelo left his work at the sacristy, Tribolo, soon to die, and Montorsoli, with Giovanni da Udine remained in possession. But when Clement VII. died in 1534, with his hope unfulfilled, it was the signal for these artists to disperse, and the sacristy was deserted. It was opened once in 1536 for Charles V. to enter. Having seen it, he mounted his horse and rode away. It must have been opened once before that date, that the bones of Lorenzo of Urbino and of Giuliano of Nemours might be placed in their sarcophagi. And in 1537, after Alessandro had perished by the dagger of his cousin Lorenzaccio, his body was placed above that of his father Lorenzo. We know too now that the bones of Lorenzo the Magnificent and his brother Giuliano found rest beneath the slab tomb where we see the Madonna and the

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statues of S. Cosmo and S. Damian, though till lately it was believed that they had been left in the old sacristy. Of the tombs of the two Medici popes, Leo and Clement, for San Lorenzo choir, nothing more was heard. They lie in Santa Maria Sopra Minerva in Rome, under the monument which Antonio da Sangallo, and Bandinelli, Montelupo and Nanni di Baccio concocted between them.

## CHAPTER XIV

### MEANINGS IN THE MEDICI TOMBS

THE reader will already have had reason to see, from more than one instance quoted in these pages, that though our chief authorities for the life of Michelangelo, Condivi and Vasari, have left us biographies, which, corrected in the light of the many documents since published, are of the greatest value, we cannot look to either authority for safe guidance where the deeper meanings of the master's work are in question. If any reader still has doubts upon the point a perusal of their accounts of the Tombs of the Medici will speedily end them. Let us take first the account of Condivi, who does not appear to have seen the interior of the sacristy at all. He is speaking of the year of the downfall of the republic, 1530, when Michelangelo received his pardon from Clement. Having stated that the sculptor had not touched chisels for some fifteen years,—a statement which in itself should teach us how careful we should be in accepting even his account of mere facts—and that he thereupon set to work, and in a few months 'made all the statues which are seen in San Lorenzo,' he proceeds to describe them and to throw his light upon their meaning. 'The statues are four, placed in a sacristy made for this in the left part of the church opposite the old sacristy, and although the intention and the form of all were alike, nevertheless they are all in different movements and actions. The sarcophagi are placed in front of the lateral faces, above the lids of which lie two great figures larger than life-size, that is a man and a woman, signifying by these Day and Night, and through both Time which consumes everything. And in order that such purpose of his should be better understood, he placed upon Night, which is made in the form of a woman of marvellous beauty, the owl and other signs appropriate thereto: so also to Day his attributes; and for the signification of Time he wished to make a rat, having left upon his work a little marble (which he never made, being prevented) because such an evil animal continually gnaws and consumes, not otherwise than Time



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devours everything. There are then other statues which represent those for whom such sepulchres were made, all, in conclusion, divine rather than human; but above all a Madonna with her little Son astride above her knee, of which I judge it better to be silent than to say little of them; therefore I pass from them.' The description needs no further comment. Vasari, who doubtless knew the 'Tombs' well, writes at greater length. After describing the statue of the Madonna and Child, and saying, rightly, that though the figures remained merely sketched out and surfaced with the *gradina*, one saw through the imperfection of the sketch the perfection of the work, he continues: 'But much more did he astound every one in his making of the tombs of the Duke Giuliano, and the Duke Lorenzo, showing that he thought that the earth alone for their greatness would not be sufficient to give them honoured sepulture, but willed that all the parts of the universe should be there, and that four statues should cover their tombs: on one he placed "Night" and "Day," on the other "Dawn" and "Twilight"; which statues are wrought with most lovely forms of attitude, and artifice of muscles, sufficient if the Art were lost, to return it to its pristine glory. There are among the other statues those two armed captains,<sup>1</sup> the one the thoughtful Duke Lorenzo in the guise of reflection, with very beautiful legs, so wrought that eye can not see better; the other is Duke Giuliano, so fierce with the turn of his head and throat, with the setting of the eyes, the profile of the nose, the defiance of the mouth, and hair so divine, hands, arms, knees, and feet: and in fact all that he wrought here is of such kind that eyes can never weary of it nor satiate themselves. Truly he who regards the beauty of the buskins and the cuirass believes it to be celestial rather than mortal. But what shall I say of the "Dawn," a nude woman, such as to call forth the melancholy of the spirit, and to make sculpture despair for its style. In which attitude one recognises her anxiety to raise herself, heavy with sleep; because it appears that in awakening she has found the eyes of that great duke closed; wherefore she writhes in bitterness, bemoaning herself in her own continued beauty, in sign of great grief. And what shall I be able to say of the "Night," a statue not merely rare but unique. Who is he who can, in any age of such an art, have ever seen statues ancient or modern so wrought, recognising not only the quiet of one who sleeps, but the grief and the melancholy of one

<sup>1</sup> Both Lorenzo and Giuliano had held the post of Captain-General to the Papal troops of Leo.



TOMB OF LORENZO DEI MEDICI

*San Lorenzo, Florence*



LORENZO DEI MEDICI (DUKE OF URBINO)

*San Lorenzo, Florence*



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who loses that which is honoured and great.' We have here the writing of a man who, fully conscious of the mysterious melancholy which haunts these figures, and not insensible of their power to stir the depths of the soul in those who look upon them, is yet persuaded that the primary purpose of their creator was to glorify the personality of the two Medici princes who lay there. It is in his view Michelangelo's version of the apotheosis of Lorenzo and Giuliano. Charmingly characteristic of him is his delightful wandering between the sorrow of Aurora on waking to find Lorenzo gone, the ineffable virtues of the Capitani, and the celestial qualities of their buskins. When he reaches the latter point he has touched safer ground. The description may make us smile, but it is a convincing instance of the effect which these statues have always had upon men of varying shades of temperament. They inspire men, in very various degrees, and set the hidden springs of their temperaments moving with very<sup>d</sup> various results. They send Giorgio Vasari along the road which he treads so often, where the true feeling of an artist runs alongside with the commonplace of a sightseer, and where an occasional lofty thought stumbles presently into an incredible bathos.

It is impossible to accept Vasari's view, that the idea which underlay this creation was direct adulation to any given member or members of the Medici family—least of all to the particular pair whose statues he completed in the sacristy. If, in accepting in the year 1520 the commission for the 'Medici Sepulchre,' the sculptor had interpreted his task as one in which the virtues and qualities of any specific member of the Medici family was to be exalted in his tomb, it is inconceivable that he should have undertaken it. The very year of the commission is important to us. It was that in which, after four years of unworthy occupation and harassment, the sculptor had seen the end of the San Lorenzo Façade at the hands of Pope Leo and Cardinal Giulio. I have already alluded to his belief—if belief it was—born of the bitterness of his soul, that Leo had never been in earnest, but had used the project to prevent the sculptor from completing the della Rovere tomb. It was at that moment that the project of the Medici tombs was placed before him; and in such a mood did he create the earliest ideas for the sacristy and its contents. The tombs of the Pope and Cardinal, the men who had just, in his view, inflicted a wound upon him, were not, it is true, by this first plan destined to appear. But it is evident that at such a time there would be no burning sense of gratitude towards the Medici which

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should create in him the spirit of adulation which Vasari's view requires. As to Michelangelo's general attitude towards the Medici at that moment it is not quite easy to gauge it exactly. There is no doubt that he felt deep personal gratitude towards Lorenzo the Magnificent, whose early kindness had so affected his whole career. But such gratitude might well exist side by side with such patriotic sentiments as a thinker and an admirer of Savonarola would be likely to hold as to the enslavement of Florence. Giuliano, Lorenzo's brother, had never been known to Michelangelo, his murder in the cathedral having taken place when the sculptor was three years old. For Giuliano, Duke of Nemours, the son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, Michelangelo may, for old acquaintance sake, have retained affectionate memory, but we know nothing on the point; while for Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino, son of Piero, and father of Alessandro, he had no reason to feel respect. Of his attitude towards the last mentioned I have spoken on several occasions, and it is evident that, taking the view he did as to the liberties of Florence, there is nothing in his relationship towards the Medici that makes it possible for us to accept Vasari's view, in its bald shape, even if that view were consistent with the character and type of mind of the sculptor.

The meanings, for they are doubtless not one but many, which underlie these figures (Plates LV.-LXIII.), impressive perhaps beyond anything which remains to us of the art of sculpture, have received an infinite number of interpretations, and will receive many more. As has been already said, they possess the quality of appealing to a score of men in a score of different ways. The 'Secret of the Tombs,' as it has been named by an eminent German critic, has been unravelled on many different principles, and by none in more masterly and thorough fashion than by him.<sup>1</sup> We have seen that the contemporaries of the master have left us no trustworthy clue. The master himself was not one to open his heart to other men, or to catalogue his meanings for the benefit of a biographer. Even in his letters he lets fall no hint of his deeper meanings—and still less in his contracts. When he speaks of the 'Prisoners' (*prigioni*) of the Louvre he describes one in the bald terms of 'a man with his hands tied behind him,' and 'Lorenzo' and 'Giuliano' are merely described as the 'two Captains,' while the 'Night' and 'Day,' 'Dawn' and 'Twilight,' are 'the figures above the sarcophagi.' A sale catalogue could not be more unemotional. Amongst his papers and drawings and even in his

<sup>1</sup> Ernst Steinmann, *Das Geheimniss der Medici-gräber*. Leipzig, 1907.

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sonnets and madrigals it is rare to find anything which throws direct light on the meaning of any given work. He hides himself away almost invariably in his own inner consciousness, and reveals nothing to the world but what it may read for itself. But in the case of the Medici there are two well-known exceptions. In the Casa Buonarroti collection exists a sheet which appears to contain an early trial sketch for the monument of Giuliano. Above are the words, twice repeated, 'Heaven and Earth' (*el cielo e la terra*), and underneath the words, 'Day and Night speak and say: We have in our swift course brought the Duke Giuliano to Death. It is quite just that he has practised the Requital upon us as he fared. And the Requital is this that from us who brought him to Death, in Death he has taken the light. And with his closed eyes hath he also closed ours, which now no more see light above the Earth. What would he have done to us if he had been in Life?' Ambiguous as is the sense of the words, they appear to show us two things: first, that a 'Heaven' and 'Earth' (as in the 'Julian Tomb') had formed a part of the design—probably two of the figures below, generally described by recent writers as 'River Gods,'—for which Michelangelo left models for Tribolo to carry out; and secondly, and more importantly, that the designation of 'Day' and 'Night' for the figures above the sarcophagus of Giuliano has Michelangelo's own guarantee here in this early stage, as it had again in 1545 when he sent his well-known lines in answer to Giovanni Battista Strozzi, who had sent him a sonnet, in which the sculptor makes Night say:

*Caro m' è 'l sonno e più l'esser di sasso  
Mentre che 'l danno e la vergogna dura.  
Non veder, non sentir m' è gran ventura.  
Però non mi destar, deh ! parla basso.*

Sweet is this sleep, and sweeter to be so  
Prisoned in stone while loss and shame endure.  
To see not, feel not—this were vantage sure.  
Therefore awake me not:—ah ! whisper low.

We have seen Vasari's view of the intention of the monument. In modern times an opinion has been advanced, and ably supported, which is diametrically opposed to that of the old biographer. This view sees in the Medici monument a directly political meaning highly unfavourable to the rule and policy of the Medici—a condemnation in fact though in emblematic form. Between these views, lying so far apart,



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of sheer laudation on the one hand, and sheer condemnation on the other, there lies an infinite series of opinions which share in greater or less degree one or both of these views, to say nothing of those which find in these works much that belongs to the great allegory of human life, without being linked with the deeds or misdeeds of a special dynasty. These intermediate views are too numerous and too complicated to analyse here, but with regard to the view which may be said to stand at the extremity of the series, the view which sees condemnation pure and simple of the Medici, a few words may be necessary. It seems as difficult to accept that view in its unreserved form as it was to accept that of Vasari. Granting that Michelangelo first entered on his project in some bitterness of soul, it is hardly conceivable that he should have undertaken this commission from the Medici Pope and Cardinal conscious that he could treat it only in a spirit the very reverse of that which they who commissioned it and were to pay for it could have desired or would have tolerated. It was one thing to reserve to himself as he did his independence of thought, and his method of dealing with that thought: it would have been quite another thing to undertake a commission with the reserve in his mind that he would presently curse where he was called in to bless. There would have been something of a savour of treachery in such conduct. The answer might be made, that at all times in his career Michelangelo showed himself spellbound, as it were, in the presence of a great commission—the empty-headed ‘Colossus’ alone excepted—from a Pope, Julius or Leo, Clement or Paul, and that in spite of the harassing sense that he was not in sympathy with the aims of the commission, he accepted always and then bemoaned his fate. But though it is true that he did seem strangely fascinated by a project which came from a Pope—the source of fascination perhaps lay in the sense and promise of largeness which so appealed to his imagination—it is not true that he ever sacrificed his right to speak and to act in the most uncompromising fashion. It was quite open to him to have refused the ‘Medici Tomb’ commission. The man who for twelve years could keep the doors of the sacristy barred against the agents of Pope Clement—who died at last with very dim knowledge of what shape his commission had taken at the hands of this masterful strong-willed man—would surely have had the courage to put aside at the first a commission which he, on the theory we are examining, undertook only to betray. It is indeed argued that that very exclusion during all those years of those who had a right to claim entry, is an

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evidence—one must admit that a counsel for the prosecution would use it as such—that the sculptor feared interruption from his Medici patrons. No doubt he did, after his experiences with the Tomb of Julius, and the San Lorenzo façade, fear such interference, and one sees in his high-handed action the fierce determination that he would be, this time, alone with his design, without the presence of enemies to his peace, meddlesome Cardinals and stupid amateurs. But a moment's reflection will show us that if he imagined he could guard a treasonable secret for long, he must have forgotten that his assistants Bugiardini and Antonio Mini had eyes and tongues. The treason would have been out soon enough if it had been there. One must add that though it is not safe to attach too much importance to the vague words of Michelangelo's memorandum on the Casa Buonarroti drawing, yet they cannot be said to favour the view that denunciation of Giuliano was the leading idea of the design. The words were, one may feel sure, never meant for any eyes but his own—their very existence had perhaps escaped his memory: but they do not breathe any spirit of denunciation or animosity. Indeed neither in the adulation theory of Vasari, nor in the denunciation theory of later writers can we, in their unreserved form, interpret the meaning of the Tombs.

It will be well to look back to the two great undertakings of Michelangelo's life before the date of 1520, namely, the Tomb of Julius and the Sistine Vault, and see once more the spirit which dominated and permeated each of those two great designs. We shall feel ourselves safe in looking, in this third great undertaking, for some kindred idea dominating the whole design. We saw that in the design for his Tomb of Julius—never accomplished (I speak of course of its first conception only)—he dealt with the Papal power on earth, of which he made Julius the impersonal, not the personal representative, under symbolic forms, as a great moral force for enlightenment, freedom from ignorance, surrounded by virtues and liberal arts—a great allegory of human life helped and illuminated by the presence of an elevating force, darkened and imprisoned by its absence. A few years later, when he is called upon to shape his great design for the 'Sistine Vault,' he again conceives a great allegory of the life of man, this time not in the light of any earthly agency or force, but directly in its dealings with its Creator—once more an allegory of Darkness and Light, Night and Day, Good and Evil, Hope and Despair, Strength and Weakness, original Purity and later Degradation—all illustrated

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by figures from his Book of Life, the Bible—the Sibyls being added because of their unconscious witness to the truth of Prophecy. The ideas which illustrate, support, and build up the great central idea are, as in the Julian Tomb, founded on a series of contrasts. Up to this point then we have two great allegories: one expressing the great moral and spiritual force acting upon earth through the moral and spiritual government of the Papacy, and the other the great moral government of man by the Creator of the universe.

When Michelangelo is now called upon to create a design which shall embody not the special qualities of some single ruler of the House of Medici, but which shall rather embrace the rule of a dynasty from Lorenzo the Magnificent to Lorenzo of Urbino, he finds himself at once in the presence of a third great opportunity where once more in the form of an allegory he may typify human life as it is affected by the government of earthly rulers—not the spiritual influence of the Papacy, but the power of an earthly Prince. As before, this presents itself at once to his imagination in a form which renders the individual members of the Medici as impersonal in his scheme, as Julius was impersonal (and did not even appear) in the first scheme for his Tomb. They are mere types of government by Princes, personal only so far as they sat above the poor bodily remains below in which Lorenzo and Giuliano had once lived and governed: individual only so far as into their forms there could be imported, not inconsistently with the character of the men in their lifetime, something which could typify some qualities—even contrasted qualities—which belong to princes and governors, as well as to ordinary men. Once more he carries out his allegory of Human Life under merely Human Government—or call it Princely Government if you will—by contrasts; contrasts which neither denounce the vices of any individual Medici ruler, nor yet cringe to his supposed virtues, but simply express the fact, as he had expressed it twice before, that there are in the life of man as governed by princes, and in the life of princes as governing man, light and shadow, day and night, dawn and twilight, good and evil, vigour and slackness, thought and action, and the thousand other contrasting elements in our life which raise it high or sink it low, and which in their endless combinations and balancings make up the sum of man's days and nights, be his life that of prince or peasant. It was, in short, the third and complementary allegory which, added to the two which had gone before it, expressed once more with all its depth of purpose, and all its melancholy suggestion, and all its intangible



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utterances which have no speech or language and yet make their voices heard amongst men, the great thinker's vision of our life.

In the ordinary monuments of the earlier Renaissance, often of the greatest sweetness and beauty, often expressive of character, we find almost invariably a distinct effort to connect by words, as in an epitaph, or by symbolic representation of the Virtues, or by personal portraiture of the dead man, the character of the monument with the character of him who lies beneath it. For epitaph you have unwise laudation, pompous narrative, or wiser silence. The Virtues, being under merely symbolic forms, claim to be present in a shape which does not challenge contradiction: they are there on duty, as a convention, and do not stand for morals. They keep guard alike on the tomb of a Pietro Riario and a San Pietro Martire. For likeness you have everything from the living *bonhomie* of Mino's 'Bishop Salutati' to the sweet vision of sleep in Quercia's 'Ilaria del Caretto.' But in every case there is the recognised necessity of setting forth with some clearness the sculptor's reading of the character of him or of her who lay there sleeping. The connection, however beautifully veiled in symbol, must still be such as to speak quite clearly to the ordinary beholder of the actual personality during life of the dead whom it commemorated. We have but two tombs from the actual hand of Michelangelo—the mutilated Tomb of Julius, and the Medici Tombs, with which we are now dealing. In both of these instances the personality of those whose memory was to be preserved has been made secondary—less so, perhaps, in the Julian Tomb—to the expression of a great symbolical meaning. It is at this point worth remembering that no portrait-bust nor portrait-statue in the proper sense, has come down to us from Michelangelo's hand. This absence of direct portraiture from his works is another indication of the temperament which was for ever endeavouring to arrive at the grandeur of a type, but was impatient of delay upon the features of the individual.<sup>1</sup> In the figures of Lorenzo and of Giuliano there is nothing of the nature of portrait. The Uffizi possesses portraits of these two men—the one of Lorenzo by an unknown hand, the other of Giuliano by Allori, from an original by Raphael. Neither portrait can be recognised in the figures on the Tomb, and indeed except that both the Dukes are clad in classical armour in possible indication that

<sup>1</sup> We have no means of learning, and contemporary writers have not told us, what amount of portrait likeness the bronze statue of Julius at Bologna presented, or whether the sculptor had generalised rather than particularised.

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they were captains of the Papal troops—to which circumstance we indirectly owe Vasari's celestial buskins—it is not possible to find any detail which would give to one who did not know their history any clue as to who they were, what they had been in life, or under what likeness they had worn their humanity.

The seated statue of 'Giuliano, Duke of Nemours,' brother of Pope Leo and uncle of that Lorenzo who sits opposite, is placed in the niche above the sarcophagus on whose sloping surfaces recline, to left and right respectively, the female figure known as 'Night' (*La Notte*) and the male figure known as 'Day' (*Il Giorno*). The seated statue of 'Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino,' son of Piero, and grandson of Lorenzo the Magnificent, is placed in the opposite niche above the sarcophagus with the figures of 'Dawn,' 'Aurora,' the female figure on the right, and 'Twilight,' *Crepuscolo*, the male figure on the left.

At the first glance we are able to recognise in the 'Giuliano' a figure which expresses an eager, active type of life, as surely as that of 'Lorenzo'—who was long ago christened '*Il Pensieroso*'—expresses the thoughtful, contemplative type. At once in these two figures the mind calls up the contrasted ideas which the figures suggest. Active and contemplative life—in men and in rulers—the eager and the apathetic; Wakefulness and Slumber—Hope and Despair—the open temperament and the gloomy—the genial and the moody—Inspiration and Remorse: the Light of Life and its Shadow: its Day and Night: its Bad and Good—but not much more of Lorenzo and Giuliano than their share in each and any of these, or in helping to bring them about for other people. Giuliano sits with his knee tensely strained—very unlike the Lorenzo—his foot planted firmly on the ground, so that he could rise at a moment's notice: his head has just turned with a rapid motion to the left side. His right hand, sinewy, nervous, and strong—a superb piece of modelling—lies for the moment loosely over the handle of his baton, while the left hand rests upon the other end of it. In this left hand, between the finger and thumb, is held a piece of money. Many interpretations have been found for this according to the meaning which is sought for the figure itself. May not the meaning of this baton and this coin thus lying in the easy grasp of the 'captain' be simply Punishment and Reward which lie in the lap of, or are dispensed by the hand of, the rulers of men: or Command and Persuasion; Compulsion and Liberality? Both, it is to be observed, are at the moment in suspense. The whole pose and

OK



LA NOTTE  
(TOMB OF GIULIANO DEI MEDICI) 1





IL GIORNO  
(TOMB OF GIULIANO DEI MEDICI)

By Giovanni Stanetti

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feeling of the figure is Activity in momentary inaction, ready to resume in an instant its proper function. Both these contrasting principles, it is most important to observe, are visibly present in the Giuliano, just as they are visibly present in the two figures 'Night' and 'Day' beneath his feet. Both of these are wholly nude. It will not be necessary again to explain at any length that by this time Michelangelo had so come to express his thoughts in terms of the human figure that he saw no irreverence in presenting it, but rather the worthiest symbol under which to express his worthiest thought. It is nothing to our purpose that the world remains but little converted to his view. We have only to do with the spirit in which he presented it. And of all men who have ever dealt with the nude in Art, no man has ever done so with worthier aim or higher intention.

The female figure which personifies 'Night' (Plate LIX.), wrought though it is with consummate knowledge and mastery of the natural form, is yet cast in a mould which seems to remove it from the sphere of mortality—not so much a woman steeped in slumber as the Spirit of Night itself. The head is drooped forward on the right shoulder, the right arm falling back upon rather than supporting it. The face in deep shadow—the figures having been actually wrought in the sacristy itself, the relations of light and shade are subtly calculated—combines with the attitude to convey the feeling of the overwhelming presence of Night and Sleep. The head is half enveloped in one of those strange coverings which Michelangelo so often uses, and in the front is set a star or planet. Beneath her left knee is an owl—the bird of night—and her left foot rests on a large and massive garland of poppy-heads and leafage—'*Lethæa papavera somno*'—symbol of sleep and death, symbol also, it is worth noting, of fruitfulness, an image derived from the number of seeds which each poppy-head produces. Beneath her left arm, which is twisted back in one of those contorted attitudes that the sculptor loved so well, lies a mask. The meanings which have been found in this mask are manifold. To some it stands merely as a symbol for the dreams of Night—to others as the mask of Life which has been laid aside. Ernst Steinmann<sup>1</sup> has recently drawn attention to the fact that the Florentines of the day were quite familiar with a certain masque or pageant which had, probably in Michelangelo's young days, been presented in the streets of Florence at one of the carnivals. The explanatory verses which usually accompanied these mimes, under the name of '*Canti Carnascialeschi*,'

<sup>1</sup> *Das Geheimniss der Medici-gräber.* Leipzig, 1907.

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have in some cases survived. The masque in question is described in a poem of six stanzas under the name of the '*Trionfo delle Quattro complessioni*,'<sup>1</sup> the 'Pageant of the four Temperaments,' in which are described four types of character corresponding to the four figures represented in the masque. The first of these is *Collera* joined to the influence of Mars, implying rather the energetic than the choleric temperament: 'Prompt, animated, keen, bold and fierce, proud, armed, furious, and lofty.' The second is *Sanguie*, the Sanguine Temperament, 'joined with the influence of the fair planet of Venus in the pure air. The glad Spring maketh her state tranquil and secure, and her kith and kin smiling, gay, human, and well tempered, under the spell of Venus, kindly, and most pleasant withal.' The third is *Flegma*—Phlegmatic Temperament—joined to the influence of Luna, *senza nessun furore*, which makes its possessors lazy, relaxed, and slow, placid, inert, gentle and somnolent. The fourth is 'Melancholy' joined to the influence of Saturn, 'Earth in company of Autumn has given it its nature. Those who are under its mastery are lean, greedy, timid and suspicious, pale, solitary, grave and thoughtful.'

The inference which Dr. Steinmann draws is that this masque, well known to Michelangelo and to his fellow Florentines, had been taken by him as a suggestion on which he might found, with some certainty that its meaning would be penetrated, his allegory of Life. It must be remembered that these pageants, so dear to the heart of Florentines, were not the ephemeral and tawdry exhibitions which survive to-day in the travelling circus or the Lord Mayor's Show. In Florence they were thought worthy to occupy the cares of capable artists—such as Piero di Cosimo, Ridolfo Ghirlandaio, and many another. They were understood and criticised in the same spirit and by the same instinct which guided a Florentine public to its judgment of a picture or a fresco. They were long remembered and quoted, and had, we may feel sure, a lasting influence upon the minds of those who saw them. There is therefore, one must fully admit, nothing derogatory to the genius of the man if we suppose that, just as Shakespeare would often build up a masterpiece, a *Hamlet* or a *Merchant of Venice*, on mummeries that had done duty in a barn, so also Michelangelo found in the Florentine masque the germs of a future masterpiece. The theory, if it did nothing else, would at least remind us that those to whose imaginations these tombs were to make their first appeal—namely, the citizens of Florence—were well

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, No. iv. p. 215.



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trained in the congenial task of reading such riddles. The mask set by the figure of the *Notte* would, on this theory, act, as it were, as a sign to those who saw it that they were looking on a great riddle of life, which it was for them to read on the same principles as they had learnt to read the minor pageants of their carnivals.

Whatever degree of value we may set upon this most interesting theory, it is at once evident that its acceptance or refusal in no way limits our interpretations of the many meanings which may be found in the figures of the sacristy. We are not tied down by it to the special identifications which may be made, or fail to be made, with the details of the old *Trionfo*, any more than we are compelled—to use once more our earlier comparison—to try and find the character and meanings of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in the 'most tragical histories' on which it was grounded. The theory, while it may give us valuable clues, yet leaves us free to reject too conscientious an attempt to recognise specific points of identity. It will also be seen at once that the acceptance of the 'Giuliano' figure as the type of the Energetic Temperament (*Collera*) in men and rulers, coupled with the complementary symbols below of 'Day' and 'Night' for *Collera* and *Sangue*, with the 'Lorenzo' again as representing the *Pensieroso*, with its complementary symbols of 'Dawn' and 'Twilight' for *Flegma* and *Malinconia*, would not be in conflict with, though it might be more exacting than, the view which I have already suggested.

As we look, indeed, at the figure of 'Day' (Plate LX.) we see no difficulty at all in recognising all the attributes which the poem enumerates for *Collera*, the active, energetic temperament. The vigorous, wakeful attitude of the massive, but not merely ponderous frame, in which every muscle is ready for action, though the action is arrested for the moment in repose, expresses no doubt quite fully the qualities of the first of the *Complexsioni*. When we turn from it to the figure of the 'Night,' we find it hard at first sight to recognise its identity with the qualities of the second of the *Complexsioni*—*il Sangue*. It is important to say, however, that 'The Sanguine Temperament' as a translation of *il Sangue*, though it is the only one which seems open to us, is misleading. The Italian word in its fifteenth-century use does not convey the same idea of Hopefulness as it does in English. It approaches more nearly to the idea of 'warm-blooded,' as, indeed, the characteristics which accompany it in the poem would indicate. It is, it will be seen, united with the ideas of Venus and Spring, and we are brought best into the atmosphere of its thought, as we find it in the

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poem, by the idea as expressed in Botticelli's picture of 'Primavera'—all that is smiling, gay, and human—fruitful and kindly. That is certainly not the first nor the last impression which we receive from the 'Notte.' Dr. Steinmann sees in the star which she wears on her forehead the planet Venus, which taken with the owl becomes the symbol of the air of heaven, *l'aer puro*. The garland on which her foot rests he regards primarily as an emblem of Spring, feeling some doubt as to whether the bossy fruits are really poppy heads—a doubt which I do not share. Certainly by these means an approximate identification is obtained with the characteristics of *il Sangue* in the poem. Yet the terms *ridente, allegra, umana*, 'smiling, gay, and human,' so applicable to such a picture as Botticelli's 'Primavera,' send us here, in Michelangelo's majestic, mysterious vision of the 'Night,' when deep sleep falleth upon men, in search of something which surely we cannot find. If we grant that the sculptor based his vision on the *Sangue* of the old masque, we must also grant that he read it to a very different issue.

With regard to the figure of *Aurora*, 'Dawn,' and of *Crepuscolo*, 'Twilight,' upon the sarcophagus beneath the 'Lorenzo,' the former in Dr. Steinmann's view must be made to correspond with the *Malinconia*, the Melancholy Temperament of the poem, while the latter, the *Crepuscolo*, fulfils the needs of the *Flegma*, or Phlegmatic Temperament. Once more, in the case of the 'Aurora,' we feel that the identity cannot be pressed home to all its details, the words 'meagre, greedy, timid, disdainful,' hardly convincing us of their presence here, whatever we may think of the remaining epithets, 'pale, solitary, grave, and thoughtful.' The sense of pain and distress is certainly strongly present in this figure. It has been noticed too that whereas the 'Notte' suggests fruitful motherhood, the 'Aurora' gives a different impression, and all symbols of fruitfulness are unexpressed. But no closer identity than is to be found in these features can be claimed for the figure. The *Crepuscolo*, or 'Twilight,' on the other hand, the sense of inert, impassive languor, forms a strong contrast to the other male figure, and fulfils the conditions of the *Flegma*, the Phlegmatic Temperament, found in the poem.

Returning now, however, to the opinion which I foreshadowed in the beginning of this chapter, without at all ignoring the general identity which Dr. Steinmann so ably establishes between the figures of the tombs and the broad features of the old masque on which perhaps it was founded, we still shall have found nothing in all this to displace the view that Michelangelo was here, under the symbols of

X



ARIADNE  
(TOMB OF GAIUS FABRICIUS BIBACULUS)





Don Giovanni Perini

CRESCENCIO  
(1480 OF LORENZO DEI MEDICI)

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'Night' and 'Day,' coupled with 'Giuliano,' and of 'Dawn' and 'Twilight' coupled with 'Lorenzo,' expressing an allegory in which all the contrasts of the life of man, governed or governing (there is no third condition) were contained: an allegory, as I have described it above, complementary to those which he had already expressed, or still hoped to express before he died, in the Julian Tomb and in the Sistine Vault. The two statues of the Medici are there not as expressing the personality of the men, but as types of character: not as held up for special admiration, nor yet pilloried there for contempt, but as partaking perhaps in their lifetime sufficiently of the character which the sculptor desires to express to justify the personification. Giuliano di Lorenzo was not a great leader: Lorenzo di Piero was not a great thinker. Each perhaps had more of the defects of his virtue than of the virtue of his defects. Those who look on the Tombs may measure the virtue and the defect for themselves, if they will, but Michelangelo gives them no invitation to do so. He invites them rather to think of the great drama of human life which lies hidden under his allegory. X

I have already pointed out that in his statue of 'Giuliano' Michelangelo has sought to symbolise the active, energetic, productive type of life and leadership, but at a moment of rest—ready for action, perhaps eager for action, but with the limbs and muscles awaiting their use rather than in use. And this attitude corresponds with that which we see in the figures of 'Day' and 'Night.' The 'Day' is the easily read type of vigorous activity restrained for the moment till the need of action shall come. The 'Night' is not so much the abnegation of all activity and energy as the presence of the deep sleep that refreshes, recuperates for action—fruitful even, and productive. For in one of the most remarkable of his sonnets in praise of night, probably a sequel suggested by and following on the very beautiful lines, which have been already quoted, which he wrote to Battista Strozzi, he ends by giving us the reason why night may be counted as more sacred than day—

*Ma l'ombra sola a piantar l'uomo serve.  
Dunque le notti più che i dì son sante  
Quanto l'uom più d'ogni altro frutto vale.<sup>1</sup>*

And so here we have, for one pair of meanings which underlie the figures of the 'Day' and 'Night,' action and the sleep and rest which produced action. When we look across to the 'Lorenzo,' we find contemplation, and the intermediate inactive stages of 'Dawn' and

<sup>1</sup> Sonnet lxiii.

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‘Twilight,’ neither full Light nor full Darkness, neither strong Action nor complete Rest, but the states which lie between. The Dawn is the intermediate state which lies between the productive stage of Night and the productive stage of full Day—but she is herself represented as unproductive. The ‘Twilight’ is the intermediate stage following on the activity of full ‘Day,’ and not yet possessed of the productive rest of ‘Night’—he too is slack of limb and indolent of attitude, but awake, like the ‘Aurora’—awake like her too to the pain of life, but full of indifference to it. The face of the ‘Crepuscolo’ is pathetic in its apathy, while the face of the ‘Aurora’ is possessed with pain. She is awaking from the night of her sleep to the pain of living. He is passing from the stress and strain of his day of life to the coming night of his rest.

That I believe to be the primary meaning which underlies the allegory of the figures of the Tombs of the Medici—but the primary meaning only, the first perhaps that would have occurred to the Florentine of that day who knew the solving of such riddles, and had his special clue to the solving of this particular riddle. But it was only one of many that would have sprung to his mind, as to ours, while we are trying to read the mysterious messages that these symbols of Life and Death, Good and Evil, of Light and Darkness, Liberty and Slavery, carry with them. All of the many contrasts which mark the phases of human life are here to be read, whether set there of intention by the sculptor, or whether to be found there only because a Great Thought at all times—like the poppy-heads themselves—has ten thousand times more seed in it than any man can count, is now impossible to say. He who had the secret kept it to his grave. He left it to be solved by each man as he would according to the measure of his commonplace or of his imagination. But for Michelangelo the rest was silence.

Nor did he leave behind him any hint as to the further expression which he would have given to his allegory if he had completed the tombs of the earlier Medici. There is once more an irony in the fate whereby Lorenzo the Magnificent, who alone of those who lie in this sacristy could claim something of greatness, should rest with his murdered brother Giuliano beneath the bare stone slab on which the statue of the Madonna, originally made for the high altar, with Montorsoli’s ‘S. Cosmo’ and Montelupo’s ‘S. Damiano,’ are now seen. We might well spare the presence of this latter pair, if the Madonna alone might be left to keep watch over the sleeping Magnifico. For nothing nobler has come to us from the hand of the great sculptor







San Lorenzo, Florence

MADONNA AND CHILD ABOVE THE TOMB OF LORENZO IL MAGNIFICO

## MEANINGS IN THE MEDICI TOMBS

(Plate LXIII.). It is nearly thirty years since the days of the 'Pietà' of St. Peter's, and it is interesting to compare the two groups. One sees at once that the Medici Madonna, though she bears her child upon her knee, is older than the St. Peter's Madonna who looks down upon her crucified Son. This Medici Madonna is of massive stately build, a woman who has learnt already to suffer and be strong, inexpressibly grave, sorrowful, dignified. This is no young mother with the happy smile upon her face, such as Desiderio, Rossellino, or the earlier Tuscans often give us. Michelangelo has left us in all, in his sculpture, six Madonnas only—for one cannot reckon the mere *promesse di martello*, whose dim shadows we see in his unfinished blocks—the Casa Buonarroti relief, the 'Pietà' of St. Peter's, the Madonna of Bruges—the tondi of the Bargello and Burlington House, and this last, the Medici Madonna. The same grave shadow is over them all—typical, like these Tombs themselves, of the mind of the man who wrought them. His thought of life as a thing of pain, of struggle, mysterious, grave, unfathomable. Life has no laughter for him. Donatello, purposeful always and even stern at times, breaks out into rippling laughter when he meets the smile of a child, and sets them dancing for the very joy of life. But the child never found out the smile in Michelangelo. I cannot think of any instance in his work which tells us from first to last that he saw anything of the exuberant Joy of Life, animal spirits of children, or the smiles of a mother. His Virgin here, while she holds her child to the breast, does not look down to smile upon it even with a sad smile. She turns with an uneasy gesture of pain, and looks across Him out into the great world as if the joy of motherhood, the love of the child at the breast, were forgotten in the forecast of some great sorrow. And it is this sorrowful attitude towards all the circumstances of human life which runs through Michelangelo's work. Tombs are not for dancing children and singing cherubs, so he thinks, and leaves them to others. He leaves also to others their vision of Death—the quiet rest and the gentle hope which those same sleeping figures of Desiderio or Rossellino, with their bright spirits about them, seem to breathe. The point of view has altered with Michelangelo. He knew his own life, full of activity, feverish at times, sorrowful at times, full of pain, ambition, disappointment, great hopes turned to emptiness and buried in cenotaphs, but he knows too little of rest and sleep. The 'Tombs' and the 'Madonna' are an echo of the man himself, as all great work must always be. He believed above all things in the great unrest of Life.



## CHAPTER XV

THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE SACRISTY. THE LAURENTIAN LIBRARY.  
OTHER WORK BETWEEN 1520-1533

IT was pointed out in the chapter on the Façade of San Lorenzo, that Michelangelo's task therein was not so much one of architecture as of sculpture—the addition to an existing structure of a flat face having architectural members by way of ornament, and much sculptural decoration. The same criticism does not apply to the new sacristy of San Lorenzo, which must be regarded as the master's first truly structural effort (Plate LXIV.).

He was here called upon to erect a building *de novo*, for the first time in his life, and to crown it with a cupola. Here, therefore, he comes before us for the first time in his life as an architect in the true sense. It is at the same time impossible to overlook the fact that here again it was sculpture that held the first place in his mind. It is a building contrived solely for the exhibition of sculpture and sculptural adornment. The structural portion of the work is to carry a marble lining, for whose sake it alone exists—which said lining is in no sense structural.

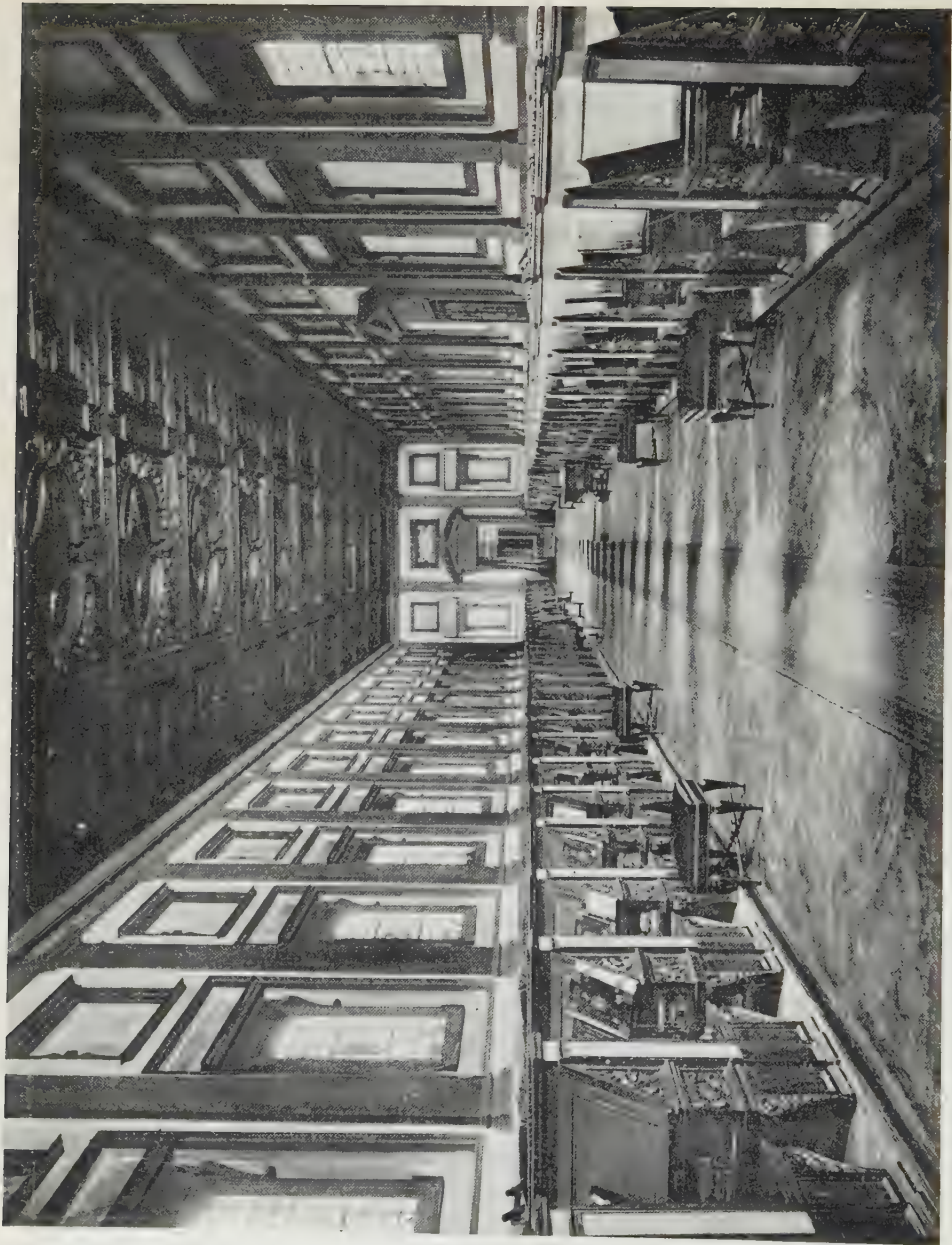
In trying to estimate the architectural value of the building several points are to be observed—first, that we see it under circumstances which are in no way those which Michelangelo had proposed. The bare spaces of whitewash, which cover the lost frescoes of Giovanni da Udine, contrast crudely with the grey stone of Fiesole, of which the building is composed, and produce a chilling sense of bareness. The windows in the cupola have been in modern times glazed with large-sized square panes of the worst type—grey plumbers' glass with red wooden frames—an object-lesson in the mischief which may be worked upon a great design by some trifling but vulgarising detail. The general aspect of the interior is, nowadays, set forth in its least inviting shape.

The building is foursquare, having a deep recess thrown out of the side on which the high altar was to be placed, and crowned with a



NEW SACRISTY, SAN LORENZO, FLORENCE

X



LIBRARY OF SAN LORENZO, FLORENCE



## THE NEW SACRISTY

cupola high in proportion to its diameter. Architecturally it must be admitted that the proportions of the sacristy fail to give to the eye the immediate sense of pleasure which it finds in such perfect examples as Brunelleschi's Chapel of the Pazzi, or (in a less degree) the same designer's old sacristy of San Lorenzo, or such a building as Sta. Maria dei Carceri at Prato, which captivate the eye by their balance and proportion at the very first view. Here, in the new sacristy, Michelangelo has had in view a building in which architecture was to wait on a sculptural design of preconceived character—and it will be seen that if that design was to be carried out, then his proportions were to some extent compulsory, and he was furthermore limited by the position which the new sacristy had to occupy. But it must be admitted that the cupola here, panelled in several gradations, and visible only, owing to its height, by craning the neck, is hard to enjoy. There is no part of the building from which cupola and wall space can be united in one act of vision. This fact, however, would have lost its importance if we could have seen the building completed with all its decoration as the designer intended, the eye in that case being gradually led up from the 'Tombs' below through the fresco decorations above, to the great cupola, also decorated in fresco, with its comparative warmth of colour softened by atmosphere and distance.

As we see the architectural lining of marble at present on the walls of the building, we find twelve unoccupied niches. These would have probably been increased by three more on the side above the tomb of the Magnifico, where the Madonna now is. That space, which is now quite bare—a space of whitewash—was to have contained Lorenzo's tomb facing the high altar, which would have stood where it now is, but somewhat further forward, and would have been of larger dimensions. The Madonna was probably to have stood in a niche<sup>1</sup> similar to those in which the 'Capitani' are placed; the base of the statue projecting too far forward shows that it was not intended for its present position between the two saints. Placed at a height, the Madonna, instead of gazing as she seems now to do, upon the floor, would have been looking down from her high position over the worshippers. That she was intended for a much higher position than

<sup>1</sup> In the Albertina collection at Vienna is a sketch of a double tomb with such a niche above it in which a Madonna is seated with a saint in the shallow recess on either side. Though the figures do not correspond with those which we now see, it may have been an early suggestion for the tomb of the two older Medici. It is believed to be a drawing from the hand of Aristotele da Sangallo.

## MICHELANGELO

that in which she is now placed is quite obvious, and the gain to the statue would be very great indeed. The great square space in the recess behind the altar was to have been lined like the wall behind the existing tombs, with marble architecture, and doubtless with niches again for statuary. Possibly also the lunettes above were to have held reliefs—though they are better adapted for fresco. To complete this great scheme, omitting the lunettes, probably twenty-six statues or reliefs—for some of the niches are far too shallow for statues in the round<sup>1</sup>—would have been needed. Of these statues seven only are to be seen to-day from the chisel of the master, with two more by Montorsoli and Montelupo. We are left to imagine what this great design might have been if it could have been seen by us in its completion—all of it, through all its parts, leading up to and expressing the great idea which dominates it.

Mention was made in a previous chapter of the commission given by Pope Clement to the master for the building of a library attached to San Lorenzo for the housing of the great collection of manuscripts and books which had been purchased, and largely increased by Leo x. It was not the first time that it had been in the hands of a Medici owner. Cosimo, Pater Patriæ, had obtained it and presented it, with a building to contain it, to the Convent of San Marco which, falling upon evil days, had presently turned it into money. When Cardinal Giovanni (Clement VII.) became Pope, he resolved to employ Michelangelo to build on to San Lorenzo, near to the old sacristy, and therefore away from the Medici Chapel, the room now known as the Laurentian Library. Michelangelo, deeply absorbed in the work of the Medici Tombs, protested that architecture was not his profession—refused, then presently relented, and finally undertook the work with little or no enthusiasm and with his heart and his interest already pledged elsewhere. The work hung fire, sometimes being entirely suspended and sometimes proceeding slowly—so slowly that when in 1534 Michelangelo finally left Florence to take up his dwelling in Rome, the building was incomplete, and the staircase not even drawn to scale or designed in a shape sufficiently precise for another architect to work to. In 1549, Lelio Torelli makes mention of a model which was in the rooms when Andrea Sansovino died. Yet in September 1558, as we find by a letter from Michelangelo to Giorgio Vasari, he had so completely forgotten what his plan had been, that

<sup>1</sup> I find the depth of some of these to be only 18 inches; the niches which hold the 'Giuliano' and the 'Lorenzo' are deeper. But in both cases the bases project beyond the edge.

## LAURENTIAN LIBRARY

he speaks of it as a kind of dream which flits across his memory—yet he cannot think that even that vague meaning records his plan, it seems so blundering (*cosa goffa*), he says, and proceeds to describe it, not very clearly. A month or two later he writes to Bartolommeo Ammanati, that he has sent him in a box a little terra-cotta model, accompanying it again with general but not particular instructions, with no measurements nor drawing to scale. The staircase, in the upshot, was finished in 1571 by Giorgio Vasari.

The great room which contains the Laurentian Library (Plate LXV.) is an oblong chamber, divided along its length by square-headed windows separated from one another by pilasters. There is therefore no wall space, and the books and manuscripts are preserved in low stands which range down each side of the room, leaving a broad space down the middle. Heath Wilson, in describing the architectural decorations which cover the walls, likens it, not inaptly, to a temple turned inside out. Flat pilasters, oblong panels, cornices above the windows supported on brackets, pedimented doors and all that belongs to the revived classical architecture of the day, appear as a facing to the side walls and ends of the building. To-day when the reaction against this form of decoration has had its full effect upon our taste, we may well find it hard to understand the enthusiasm of Pope Clement when he said of the great entrance door which is seen at the end of the room—an opening crowned with a triangular pediment enclosed within a curve, and flanked by two heavy Doric columns, whose sole duty it is to support a cornice—that it was the most beautiful doorway, ancient or modern, which he had ever seen. But the remark is of great value to us in showing us that the work was thoroughly in the taste of the day, a taste which Michelangelo himself was helping to shape and to perpetuate. An architect may well protest that features which should be structural, columns and pilasters whose purpose should be to support weight, and to take their share in giving stability to a building, can never fitly be employed as superficial ornament added without structural reason to the face of a wall. It was the taste of the age that they should be so employed; and if the principle be a false one, and the style which results from it one which was to lead presently to a meaningless and pompous ostentation, without heart and without utility, yet it must be admitted that Michelangelo used it with a dignity which almost overcame the inherent viciousness of the method. Taken singly, feature by feature, the Laurentian Library offers easy spoil to the critic. Taken as a whole,



## MICHELANGELO

the great chamber produces a dignified and impressive result. It is customary to claim Michelangelo as the designer of every detail in the room from the panelled ceiling to the wooden bookshelves and the inlaid cement floor. If the word suggester be substituted for designer, we shall be nearer to the facts. No doubt Michelangelo gave the general intention of his plan to the artists, specialists in their crafts, whom he employed, and exercised full control as to material and general arrangement. Indeed, when Clement desires that the bookstands shall be of carved walnut wood rather than of any other material, it is to Michelangelo that Sebastiano del Piombo writes. But, subject to that general control, there can be no doubt that the artists were allowed a tolerably free hand in their manner of carrying out the work. Indeed, when we remember that the master did not even leave measured plans for the staircase, a task which would have been congenial to his taste, if his mind had been free from more absorbing interests, it becomes very improbable that he should have furnished working drawings for the details of a desk or of a floor. The carved wooden ceiling was carried out by two very capable men, Carrota and Tasso, who with two assistants, Battista del Cinque and Ciapino, probably at a somewhat later date executed the walnut bookstands and benches. Tribolo the sculptor, carried out the pavement of a kind of *stacciato* or marble cement. The glass windows have been attributed to Giovanni da Udine, who died in Rome in 1564. These windows are dated 1558 and 1568. It is extremely doubtful if Giovanni had any share in the design or execution of either set, but if his hand is to be seen in either, it would be the first. In looking at this room of the Laurentian Library—certainly one of the most interesting to be seen, even in Florence—we have to remember that Michelangelo himself never saw it in its completed state. When he left Florence in 1534, the Library was a mere shell, accessible only by the builders' ladders and platforms.

At this point it will be convenient to give a brief account of one or two works which belong to the period of the master's labours at San Lorenzo. Of these the painting of the 'Leda,' executed during the troubled year of 1529, owed its origin to his visit to Ferrara to inspect the fortifications of that place. On that occasion Michelangelo made promise to the Duke of Ferrara of some work from his hand, and it is probable—indeed one hopes that it was so—that Ferrara himself selected the subject, which is thought to have been founded on an ancient gem belonging to the duke's collection. When the picture was completed, the duke's agent tried to cheapen it, so Vasari's story



DAVID OR APOLLO

*Baroglio*



BRITISH MUSEUM

*Barzello, Florence*



## DAVID OF THE BARCELLO

goes, with the result that the painter in wrath refused to let him have it at any price. Presently the picture, in charge of Antonio Mini, to whom it had passed either by gift from, or agreement with, the painter, was sent to Lyons where there had long existed a rich and flourishing Italian colony. It became presently the property of the king, after a series of transactions between the various Italian agents which robbed the unfortunate Mini both of the picture and of the profits. The work remained at Fontainebleau till the reign of Louis XIII., when the director, Des Noyers, ordered it to be destroyed. It seems probable that the picture was merely defaced, and in parts obliterated. It was reported that the mutilated work had found its way to England, and the picture, which is now in possession of the National Gallery but is not exhibited, is believed to be the original, heavily repaired, which was painted for the Duke of Ferrara.

To this period also belongs the very beautiful unfinished statue of 'David' (Plate LXVI.), which at present (1907) stands in the ground-room of the Bargello. This figure was till recently considered to be an 'Apollo' which, according to Vasari, had been a commission from Baccio Valori, the Medici partisan, undertaken at a time when the sculptor's hands were fully occupied with the Medici tombs. Whether from that cause, which is most probable, or because Valori's action towards the liberties of his country was repellent to the master, or for the reason suggested in several previous instances—namely, that he had satisfied himself with the idea which he had expressed, Michelangelo could not prevail upon himself, even though Clement himself pleaded for Valori, to finish the statue. But the work in the Bargello no longer passes under the name of an 'Apollo,' but is recognised as 'David.' There is, however, little doubt that we have here the statue which Vasari records as begun for Valori. The figure is in an incomplete stage, but we need feel no regret at the condition of a work which expresses even in this stage all that the master intended, which is so characteristic of the man, his thought, and his methods, and which at the same time is animated by a sense of beauty that is seldom present in his works in so high a degree. The young shepherd stands with one foot raised upon a rounded mass of marble whose meaning has not been made plain by the chisel. The torso, nearer to completion than any other portion of the figure, is slightly twisted, the left arm being bent across to take the sling which hangs upon the right shoulder. The pose is one of the greatest ease and gracefulness, and the whole figure gives the feeling of youthful beauty in the perfection

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of its strength. Both the pose and the details are free from all tendency to exaggeration. The limbs, it is true, are over massive, but it is to be seen at a glance that this effect is due to the stage in which we see the statue. Much marble remains to be removed from the surface, especially around the neck and back, and over all the lower limbs. There is no statue from the sculptor's hand which is more instructive to us as to his method of hewing his thought out of the marble, and bringing it forward stage by stage so that wherever the work is arrested it is still a complete and beautiful thought.

We have already seen reason to assure ourselves that Michelangelo was sculptor rather than modeller—one who preferred mallet and chisel and a block of marble to fingers and modelling tool and a lump of clay—one who enjoyed to carve down to his idea, therefore, rather than to build it up. For though both the processes have to be well known to and employed by every sculptor, yet they proceed on directly opposite principles. The sculptor proper, or carver, whether in marble, stone, or wood, removes material stage by stage, bringing each portion of his work to the same relative degree of finish. The modeller, on the other hand, builds up his material,<sup>1</sup> clay or wax, stage by stage, bringing each portion likewise to the same relative condition. It is the custom of almost all modern sculptors to prepare a full-sized clay model of the ultimate work. Many sculptors allow this design to be transferred to marble by skilled carvers, who by mechanical aids are able to block out the subject accurately to scale, the sculptor taking over the work for its final stages only. It is evident that in this case a work arrested in an early stage of the marble would not be the handiwork of the sculptor himself.

Michelangelo does not seem to have prepared full-sized models (except where, as in the Bologna statue, casting in bronze was to follow), but he contented himself with small wax sketches or models. Sometimes he appears even to have omitted these, and with nothing but the main lines sketched with charcoal on the block, to have attacked it mallet and chisel in hand. Obviously, however, this last proposition can only be asserted with reserve. What may safely be asserted is that Michelangelo so far reversed the modern practice that he himself hewed the first thought out of the marble with his own hands, attaching more importance to these stages of his work than to the finishing and polishing processes which he either never arrived at

<sup>1</sup> This is what he ought to do rather than what he always does, for the pernicious practice still allowed in some art schools of putting on too much to cut it away again, is disastrous.

## MODELS

or was willing to leave to an Urbino, a Montelupo, or a Montorsoli—seldom to the gain of the statue. That he was capable of finishing his work to the highest pitch of technical perfection is evident in the works which were wrought to an end by his own hand, the St. Peter's 'Pietà,' the 'Moses,' the 'Night,' and the 'Morning.' It is equally evident that he often saw his work—all that he asked or hoped from it—complete without the addition of this high technical finish, and that he could not bring himself to add to it that which told nothing more save skill of hand. It is thus with the beautiful 'David' of the Bargeïlo. It is complete in its expression, at the stage in which he left it. It would not have been so but for the fact that with him thought and technique went hand in hand.

Other works commissioned but never attempted, or if attempted, lost to us, have already been mentioned in the chapter which dealt with the days of the defence of Florence and of the return of the Medici. When, in September 1534, Michelangelo left Florence, he left it for ever. He reached Rome only two days before the death of Clement, and from that time forward never set eyes upon the works which he had left behind him.



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE RETURN TO ROME, 1534—THE SISTINE 'JUDGMENT'

WHEN Michelangelo, late in September of 1534,<sup>1</sup> turned his back upon the home of his youth, his departure was probably hastened by the knowledge of Clement's illness. In him he was to lose a protector without whose safeguard, life in Florence, under the worthless Duke Alessandro whom he had made his enemy, was both in his own opinion and that of his friends worth perhaps hardly a few days' purchase. It was on the 23rd of September that the sculptor came in view of Rome once more. The great landmark, which in these days the eyes of every traveller instinctively seek, was wanting to the city—the Cupola of St. Peter's, which, indeed, from any considerable distance becomes almost Rome itself. It is very difficult to think of Rome without it.

It was indeed on the Vatican, but hardly on St. Peter's, that his thoughts must have been fixed. The hand of death was upon the last of the Medici Popes. The future was all uncertain for the master. Anxiety awaited him in Rome. He was bound hand and foot by contracts which cried out for fulfilment and whose fulfilment depended less upon himself than upon the event which none could forecast with accuracy—the choice of the new Pope. It is probable that he returned to his studio in the Macello dei Corvi with the sincere desire to complete the Tomb of Julius, but there had lately come between that desire and its fulfilment a fresh impediment. The Pope who now lay dying had determined to fill the end wall of the Sistine Chapel above the altar with a large fresco representing the 'Last Judgment.'<sup>2</sup> The mind of the master, ever eager to shape a new thought to some magnificent

<sup>1</sup> Michelangelo left Florence in September 1534. There is, however, evidence that he paid another hurried visit to Florence, while his final departure took place in December of that year, after which he never saw Florence again.

<sup>2</sup> When the news of Clement's death reached Florence, the artists who were engaged in the sacristy, including Giovanni da Udine, packed up their chattels and departed, a curious comment on the confidence that was felt in the loyalty of a Pope's heirs. Nevertheless, in 1568, the heirs of the Medici completed the Library windows in Clement's memory.



THE LAST JUDGMENT

*Sistine, Rome*



CHRIST AND THE MADONNA  
(FROM THE LAST JUDGMENT)

*Sistine, Rome*



## THE LAST JUDGMENT

end, was doubtless far more occupied with this new interest than with the heart-breaking obligations of the almost abandoned Tomb. But to-morrow or next day perhaps Clement would be as Julius. What new claim might come from the unknown successor? What shattering of the older projects? What fresh hope or fresh disappointment? He was not, however, to be kept long in suspense. When Alexander Farnese became Pope, under the name of Paul III., he instantly established his claim to Michelangelo's services by continuing the commission for the 'Last Judgment' fresco,—and further made it plain to the Duke of Urbino, who was the living representative of the heirs of Julius, that he must be content with the best that, under these new conditions, the sculptor could offer. The history of the negotiations in connection with the tomb of Julius has already been told. But even a Pope's authority could not free the sculptor from the shadow of that ill-starred enterprise. When, in 1537, Paul III., following the example of Clement, freed the sculptor by a Papal brief from all obligations to work for any but himself, Michelangelo was still haunted, as well he might be, by the ghost of his abandoned duty. The years during which he was engaged upon the 'Last Judgment' were not the least troubled nor the least unhappy of his life, and at the age of sixty the physical strength and the buoyancy of youth which had sustained him in the colossal achievement of the vault were no longer his to trust to. It is indeed sorely to be lamented that the painting of the great wall of the Sistine did not follow instantly upon the painting of the vault. If Julius had lived it is probable that it would have done so. In that case we might have had a work,—not necessarily of this subject,—which breathed the spirit, and continued the glorious allegory of the vault. But the thirty years which had passed since the scaffold was removed from the Sistine Chapel had brought, not merely changes in the outlook of the master upon his art, but shadows upon the spirit and darkening perhaps of the hope, which, on the whole, in spite of the grave mysterious forms in which it is shrouded, permeates the allegory of the vault. There we read the conflict of Light and Darkness in the physical order of the world, and in the moral order of man's life,—but Light in the main prevailing: all the story of man's life and man's fall and degradation still leading up, with the testimony of prophets and sibyls to its truth, to the great Hope of Redemption, and in that spirit, perhaps, we might have seen his great story concluded, even if it had been a 'Last Judgment' which concluded it, had it fallen to him to complete his fresco immediately after the vault, say in

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those days of Leo when he was wearing out the dreams of his youth in the quarries of Carrara.

The great wall above the high altar had, as we have said, remained as it had been in the days of Julius for more than thirty years. Before Michelangelo's design could be placed upon the wall it was necessary to destroy the frescoes, three in number, by Pietro Perugino. The loss of these frescoes is a matter of deep regret to us, as perhaps it was also to the master, though he felt little admiration for the Umbrian painter, whom he called a bungler in Art, probably with reference to his mannered drawing of the nude. The wall also contained at that time two large windows which admitted light from that end. These had to be filled in, and the whole wall to be prepared again for fresco, according to the method previously described in this book,—a matter requiring several months to allow of proper drying of the plaster. Vasari in his life of Sebastiano del Piombo, declares that Sebastiano, who seems to have had charge of the work, prepared it for oil painting rather than fresco, and was compelled by the master to take it down again. No hint in any letter or document confirms this statement, which is probably untrue. The wall has suffered more than the vault, and more also than the frescoes of the 'Tuscan masters along both the sides, from cracking and injury. This is partly owing to its being more accessible and therefore more exposed to the reckless carelessness of the chapel officials, and to the still more destructive carefulness of the restorer. The smoke of the candles from the altar is also said to have played its part in darkening the fresco. But the main and most serious injuries are generally attributed to cracking, the result of earthquakes and of an explosion in the magazine of the Castle of St. Angelo. I am myself inclined to believe that the facing of the wall was from the first not so well and safely prepared as in the case of the vaulting, and it may be also that the actual method of the master was not so admirably simple and safe as in his earlier work. It is, however, certain that from these united causes the fresco of the 'Last Judgment' has been thought from time to time to need, and certainly has received, far more cleaning, retouching and restoration than the earlier frescoes of the vault. Paul iv., offended at the nudity of most of the figures had, it is said, decided to destroy the whole fresco, even in the lifetime of the painter, before it had existed thirty years; but he contented himself with employing Daniele da Volterra to drape to a slight extent some of the more conspicuous of the figures—an occupation which at once earned for him

## THE LAST JUDGMENT

from the unsparing Romans, the title of the 'breeches maker.' The fresco took its share, and probably far more than its share from its greater accessibility, in the various cleanings which were designed to restore the unhappy work to 'its pristine beauty' till in 1762 the fiercest zeal of the *barbaro ritocco*, under Stefano Pozzi, fell upon it; and a small company of inferior artists—so says Richard, an eye-witness,—was let loose upon it to provide further draperies. The explosion of 1798 produced further injury, and provided further opportunity for repairs. Under all the circumstances one can only feel wonder that the fresco has preserved so much as it has of the original work of the master. The work, which is commonly stated to have been begun in 1534, was probably not touched before the following year in summer or autumn, after due time had been allowed for drying, and it was completed in 1541, having therefore occupied some six to seven years,—an achievement which, though less rapid than that of the vault, is still, considering the vast number of figures which the work contains and the advanced age of the painter, amongst the most extraordinary feats of which we have any record in Art.

The subject of the 'Last Judgment' is not one of great antiquity in Italian Art. So far as I know, the earliest instance which can be quoted is a relief by Antelami, of about 1170, in the Baptistry of Parma, where it is noticeable that the torments of the damned are omitted. But the subject was in great favour with the early French sculptors of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, who at Chartres, Amiens, and Paris treat the scene with no less sense of beauty and with more sense of restraint than the primitive Italian masters, who presently began freely to employ the same subject. Niccolò Pisano used it in both his pulpits at Pisa and Siena and Giovanni at Pisa and Pistoia, to be followed a little later by the sculptors of the façade of Orvieto. The painters, from Giotto onwards, through Orcagna at the Novella, and the painter of the fresco in the Campo Santo at Pisa, to Fra Angelico, each handled the subject once or more in his lifetime. The subject gave scope for the sweet and simple treatment of the souls of the blessed, such as was well suited to the vision of these men. But their rendering of the souls of the condemned, hunted to their doom by ludicrous demons in horns and hoofs, and presided over by a Satan who is only worthy of an old English Mummary was, without an exception, so childishly material and so incongruous, that it could only have given to the most conscience-stricken sinner a sense of comfort from its impossibility. We forgive



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it in these primitive men because of a half-formed belief which we retain that in the simplicity of their souls they themselves believed it. We forgive it in them just as we are ready to forgive in a child what we do not forgive in a grown man. We measure therefore a Giotto or an Orcagna or an Angelico, the comparative children in Art as we count them, by a different standard from that which we apply to a Signorelli or a Michelangelo—yet with doubtful justice and with more doubtful logic. For, after all, can we assure ourselves that the figure of a creature half bird, half animal, wholly demon, who applies an iron toast-fork to the half-consumed body of a sinner, represents the painter's true belief, if he should be taxed with it, any more than Signorelli's sinewy executioners and Michelangelo's brawny demons who perform much the same offices in a more human shape? The truth is, that the subject, however treated, lies, for all artists and poets alike, primitive or advanced, whether struggling with imperfect powers of drawing and design or consummate masters of the nude, outside of the region of possibility. It is no question of truth of representation, though, if it were so, the balance might be in favour of the later men. But whereas in the case of the primitives, with their childish grotesqueness, we put them at once aside, and no question of their truth could ever possibly arise, in the case of Signorelli, and still more of Michelangelo, there is in the actors of the scene just so much truth to the forms of humanity, as touching not the scene but the human forms concerned in it, that we find ourselves more face to face with subordinated questions of truth. And we are apt to find ourselves more offended here, more repulsed by the presence of certain truths which we have learned to do without, and do not desire to have forced upon us, than we were in the more outrageous representations of the primitives, where no semblance of truth, even to bodily form, prevailed. The fault lies in the attempt to represent in any corporeal form, bestial or human, any such scene at all. But if it is to be attempted, the conception of Michelangelo is of the higher order in every sense.

With regard to the question of the nude figures, which gave at the time and have since given so much offence, it is one which is difficult to handle without seeming to fall into the irreverence of which the painter himself was accused. The question has arisen from time to time in these pages, but has never forced itself upon us in so trenchant a form as from this great fresco in a place held most sacred in the eyes of the Christian world of the day. It was in some sense a challenge to the acceptance or rejection by Christian opinion of a



ST. LAWRENCE  
(FROM THE LAST JUDGMENT)

*Sistine, Rome*



*Sistine, Rome*

GROUP OF ANGELS  
(FROM THE LAST JUDGMENT)



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great principle which through his life had been held to by the painter. And yet it is doubtful if it seemed to him in any sense a challenge, so naturally and so inevitably did it grow out of his assured faith in the nobility of man as he came from the hand of God: the faith of one who realised, and expected others to realise, how man, even in his outward form, excels all else that has been created—

*‘Quanto l’uom più d’ogni altro frutto vale.’*

He had, be it remembered, in the vault above treated humanity at its creation, in its pure original shape. Now that he was to join on to it, in close touch with it, this picture of humanity in the last shape which it is to assume, he was carrying his view, certainly not an ignoble or unworthy one, very nearly—but not quite, since there is at least one figure which was always draped—to its logical conclusion. The mind no doubt receives a shock at the representation of Christ and the attendant angels as wholly nude figures. To Michelangelo it was not, as is often alleged, a mere opportunity for exulting and reckless employment of unrivalled power of drawing the nude human form, but it was to him the presentation of man, and therefore of the Man Christ, who is to judge the world because he has partaken of man’s nature, under the noblest form known to him. If he had been challenged on the subject, his defence, if he had deigned one, would probably have been that Man at the Judgment is to carry a glorified body in the one event, a debased body in the other, but not a draped body so far as we are told; and that God made our body, but man made the clothes. The answer might be defective, since man lives and sees, and cultivates even his higher moralities, through a veil of convention. The fault, one becomes once more aware, lies in the attempt to represent that which, whether seen through the real or the convention, through the nude as the Creator made it, or the draped as man drapes it, it must be equally impossible to represent without offence to a higher and more spiritual ideal.

But probably in neither of the causes hitherto touched upon lies the real source of the dislike which so many minds are conscious of as they look at the Sistine ‘Judgment.’ In all the previous attempts to represent the scene—save that of Signorelli at Orvieto—there is a certain sense of gentleness and calm, which, in spite of the vulgar demons and their scorching victims, leaves the more lasting impression. When the gentle-souled Angelico essays to portray to us the torments of the damned, little enough to his taste, in the

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'Last Judgment' panel in the Accademia, we merely turn away from his toy-shop image of Satan, to enjoy his exquisite little roundabout dance of happy souls and angels in the flowery fields of Heaven. So too with the 'Paradise' of Orcagna in the chapel of the Novella. The Christ in these representations, whether he sits alone or with the Virgin at his side, is no fierce being to whom vengeance belongeth, but a gentle though just judge. The saints about him are possessed of the peace of Heaven. The angels are ethereal, exquisitely beautiful beings who stand apart from the sphere of humanity, or else are decked in a spiritualised humanity. From all semblance of violence or fierceness in their office the chief actors in the 'Judgment,' Christ himself, the saints, the angels, are entirely free. It is the absence of this spirit, and the presence in its place of a violence amounting at times to ferocity, in beings presented to us under the magnificently rendered forms of strong humanity, that convey to us in Michelangelo's fresco so wholly a different impression. I have sought, anxious to find it, throughout the fresco for one face, in Saviour, saint or angel, of which it can be said with certainty that it wears a look of pity—unless it be that of the Virgin, who here, however, bears a very secondary part. The figures of the martyrs, who with vehement action display the instruments of their martyrdom, are interpreted by some writers as pleading with Christ for mercy on those who slew them—though why should the Christ need so to be pleaded with? I must, I fear, take the view rather of those who interpret these strongly agitated figures as displaying their emblems to less merciful purpose. That is, however, and it must remain, a matter of opinion. What cannot be a matter of opinion, is the fact that the Saviour himself is presented to us in a form in which physical strength and violent action produce a sense of fierceness which is foreign to all thought of mercy and pity. The figure would serve as well for a God of Olympus helping to hurl the attacking giants into Tartarus. The attendant saints to left and right of the Judge, the great company of those who have already entered Paradise or are just entering it, are also cast in the same magnificent physical mould, whilst the angels who summon mankind from the four ends of the earth are beings of superhuman strength. It is difficult, as we look at these strong trumpeters, to think of them as forming part of that *dolce sinfonia del Paradiso* which Dante pictures to us. The angels here are without wings. Michelangelo, it should be observed, follows the Old Testament records of the apparition of angels, as to Abraham and Lot for example, in the ordinary fashion

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of men. He was not under the temptation, too strong for other men, to yield to the artistic joy of painting or modelling a wing. That interest, as I have earlier pointed out, had long gone the way of all that did not pertain to the form of man. His temptation lies in a different direction—in the over-rendering of bone and muscle. And I cannot help thinking that this over-emphasis, as it seems to us, of strength in these mighty human forms throughout the fresco, is an attempt to force his language—the language of the human form—to express the glorified body of the Resurrection under the likeness of superb physical strength (his highest type of perfection) free from all weakness and physical defect. He was from the first a worshipper of the stronger, more massive forms of humanity. Neither in the *Inferno* nor the *Paradiso* have the weakly among humanity a place. But a glance at a photograph of the fresco will show that in its upper half, the half that is of the glorified saints, the figures are very much taller, more massive, and, according to his standard, of a more glorified physique. It is usually said that the over-development of frame and muscle visible in the ‘Judgment,’ as compared to the vault, is due to the fact that in the later fresco Michelangelo was giving full rein to his inherent love of massive form, and that he was no longer checking this tendency to exaggeration by the constant chastening which comes from strict and continued drawing of the human form—in short, that he was being, as happens so often to an artist, caught in the snare of his own knowledge and his own mastery of form. To some extent this may be true. But in the work of a man in whom the expression of a great dominating thought held always the first place, I believe that this choice of forms represents not so much a mannerism—for such it would be—of the artist, as a deliberately chosen form of expressing what is to him a great fact. That his view has never been understood, or has never found acceptance, is proved by the dislike which the fresco has at all times created in many minds. It is strange that the first protest and attack proceeded from Pietro Aretino, whose views on such a point could demand no respect if they did not doubtless represent a large body of contemporary opinion. In a letter to Michelangelo, written in 1537 when the fresco had been two years in hand, he expresses his opinion of the irreverence and indecency of the representation in no doubtful terms. The letter has the further interest in showing that already, in 1537, the fresco was so far advanced that its character could be clearly reported to a second person. The answer of Michelangelo, courteous, but full of veiled sarcasm, ‘because



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you are unique of worth in the whole world,' establishes the advanced condition of the work at that early period. He has, he says, unfortunately completed a great part and cannot avail himself of Pietro's imagination. But he had not so completed it that it was beyond the insertion of a detail—for when, a year or two later, the unlucky Messer Biagio di Cesena, papal master of the ceremonies, in the presence of Paul gave his opinion of the nudities in good round terms, the painter took his revenge by adding the honest official's head to the Minos in the lower right-hand corner—possibly the last figure which remained to be painted. The Pope's answer to Biagio's protest is a matter of history. He had power, he said, to release from the Purgatorio, but not from the Inferno. Whether this part of the story is true or false, it reminds one that the fresco had passed the censorship of the Pope, and that every detail must have received his sanction.

The picture must be understood as completing the great allegory of the vault, the separation of light from darkness, of the evil from the good—receiving its final consummation and example in the separation once more of the evil from the good at the 'Last Judgment.' We have thus the cycle completed from the creation of the world to its close, from the creation of the first man in his corruptible form, to the triumph of the second man, and those who share his nature in a glorified form. One cannot doubt, as has already been said, that this 'Last Judgment' would have breathed a different spirit if it had been added to the great cycle of the stories of the vault in the early life of the painter. Those thirty years of a life of strain and stress, and of contact with men and manners in so perilous an age as the early sixteenth century in Italy, had insensibly darkened his view of life, always indeed tinged with deep and dignified melancholy but not always stirred by anger or expressed in fierceness. It has been said that the change of spirit, here visible, is due to the fact that he had steeped himself in the writings of Dante, had taken his visions from the Old Testament, and had drunk deep of the teaching of Savonarola. But all this was as true of the years in which the vault was painted as at this later date. Savonarola had been, when the vault was painted, dead a full ten years. Dante had been the sculptor's familiar in the days of the Casa Medici. The fresco is indeed full of the spirit of Dante—but Dante wrote a *Paradiso* as well as an *Inferno* and there is no echo of the *Paradiso* here. And to Michelangelo the New Testament was an open book as much as was the old. The words and the voice and the personality of Savonarola, which had so im-



GROUP OF THE CONDEMNED  
(FROM THE LAST JUDGMENT)

*Sistine, Rome*



CHARON'S BOAT  
(FROM THE LAST JUDGMENT)



## THE LAST JUDGMENT

pressed the painter were as strong upon him in his youth as now. All of these influences were indeed still living influences upon him in the days of the 'Last Judgment,' but so they always had been. One must, I think, lay more emphasis upon the other causes, which had brought him to a darker and sadder vision of life. He drew now alike from the Bible, from Dante, from Savonarola, and from life itself the sterner lessons of God's dealing with man. The vision of punishment for sin is stronger now than the vision of redeeming mercy. He has placed the mouth of his Hell immediately over the High altar.

And in this respect he is true only to a portion of the great poem of the *Divina Commedia* of which he was so deep a student, namely to the 'Inferno.' As one turns over the pages of that part of Dante's vision, one lights continually upon passages which breathe the same spirit in poetry as the 'Last Judgment' in paint. There is indeed no man either in letters or in art amongst his countrymen or outside of them, in his own age or in any other, whose mind and vision have so close an affinity with Michelangelo's as that of the great Tuscan poet. But though the affinity is evident, it cannot often be traced directly in the similarity of the motive. In this case, however, the incident of Charon, who beats with his oar the loitering and reluctant souls who are unwilling to leave his boat for that unknown shore, is borrowed directly from an early canto of the *Inferno*. This introduction of an incident, which, though it came to him in that exact form from Dante, *il suo famigliarissimo* as Vasari calls him—traces back to heathen mythology and to Virgil, is very striking in such a place as the Sistine Chapel. It is not on a par with his introduction of the Sibyls among the prophets in the vaults above. Their appearance there has already been explained.<sup>1</sup> In the case of the Charon of the 'Last Judgment' there is no such appeal to Christian tradition. But by this time Dante had become to his countrymen so completely the accepted text book, so to speak, of the *Inferno* that even such a reference as this, which to us might seem to carry the mind across to a pagan motive, was by them read at once in the light of their great poet, and gave no offence. As yet, however, no artist of the Renaissance had ventured so far. It is notable that when in 1545 Pietro Aretino renewed his attack upon the fresco, he did so upon the ground of injured modesty and left the incident of Charon unassailed.

<sup>1</sup> Michelangelo's admiration for Dante expressed itself in his offer to erect a monument to him at his own expense, and in two sonnets written in his honour, in one of which he declares the poet to be the greatest man that Italy has produced. He owned a copy of the poet which he had illustrated. It went down with the ship that carried it near Civitavecchia.

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Technically this great work (Plate LXVIII.) differs in several respects from the earlier frescoes of the vault. Granting that no criticism of the colour can be accepted save with the reserve that the work has been thrown out of harmony by additions and restorations, there is more fulness of colour, and that of a somewhat more ruddy hue in the painting of the figure. And this is not wholly to its advantage, for it does not constitute an approach to the truer painting of flesh—one neither asks for nor expects to find that quality here—but merely a deeper hue added to work conceived in the spirit of bas-relief. Michelangelo's view on this point admits of no dispute. In a letter written to Benedetto Varchi he makes his confession of faith on this point: 'Painting appears to me more excellent the nearer it goes towards relief: and relief appears to me to be more faulty the nearer it goes towards painting. Therefore it was wont to seem to me that sculpture was the lantern of painting.' True to this principle he at all times models with the brush rather than paints in the fully developed sense of the later painters of Venice, or such men as Velasquez or Rubens. He seeks to realise his ideal of the beautiful through Form rather than through Colour. His colour indeed, when it is at its best, as in the vault, is but a silvery *crepuscolo*—bas-reliefs seen in a white dawn or twilight. And so in his case the addition of a ruddier tint to the bodies seen against a stronger blue does not make for greater reality while it produces a less agreeable result. We miss the lovely silvery half tones and greys which belong to the 'Creation of Adam,' or the 'Fall of Man.' Many of the individual groups throughout the work are of high beauty: and the drawing of the figure is masterly. There is indeed one form to which exception must be taken—that of a woman on the left of immense height receiving into Paradise her daughter, who embraces her knees: both have received the services of Daniele. This figure is of quite impossible stature and proportion, and yet the group is of great beauty, and indeed is one of those bits of tender feeling which could be ill spared from the scene. The handling throughout, if less summary than that of the vault, is still splendidly direct and rapid, never careless, and never faltering or ready to depend upon second thought or retouching. There is indeed now visible very much retouching *a secco*, but it does not appear to be from the hand of Michelangelo. The figures that have escaped this process—such as the St. Lawrence just below the right foot of the Saviour, are, in the superb directness of their handling, and

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the faultless mastery of their modelling, possible only to the master himself.<sup>1</sup>

To the period during which the painter was engaged on the 'Last Judgment' is generally assigned the fine bust of 'Brutus'—now in the Bargello (Plate LXVII.). There is no exact record of its date, though it is known to have been commenced for Cardinal Ridolfi. It has been commonly assigned to the year 1537 or to a period immediately following, because in that year occurred the murder of Alessandro dei Medici at the hands of his contemptible cousin Lorenzino, better known as Lorenzaccio, whom it pleased to pose as a Brutus. So far as style is concerned it may well belong to such a date. It is of the sculptor's best and strongest work. But there is something very distasteful in the belief, which I find myself unable to share, that Michelangelo should have been ready directly to glorify, however much he despised Alessandro, the foul and vulgar murder by which Lorenzino, a few degrees baser than the poor mule whom he butchered, made way not for Liberty but for another Medici ruler. The ideal of Brutus was ever present to the Renaissance mind, nor is it necessary to connect it in that of Michelangelo with an ignoble crime which had no redeeming feature. It is more probable that it was begun at an earlier date when the sculptor could view his ideal in the light of a less revolting example. But he never finished it. It was handed over to Tiberio Calcagni, who in due reverence to his master, refused to do more than add some finish to the drapery. The face and head are as they came from the master's chisel. No added finish could give us more than we have here or further express the character which is in this unforgettable masterpiece. The grand type of head and face, full of determination and strength, the mouth firmly set, above the strong square jaw, the eyes under the slightly compressed brows full rather of purpose than of fierceness, and the set of the head, turned sideways as in the 'Giuliano,' make up a presentment, which, though it is clearly ideal, is yet so full of personality that one thinks of it as a living Brutus. The flesh—on which the marks of the toothed chisel still remain, is modelled over the bony structure of the face with extraordinary reality. The strongest work which can be found amongst the great Roman bust sculptures which survive to us seems weak beside it.

<sup>1</sup> Heath Wilson states, on the evidence of the dividing seams, which show how much *intonaco* was covered in a day, that as a rule the painter occupied two days on a life-sized figure. These seams are much more evident than in the frescoes of the vault.



## CHAPTER XVII

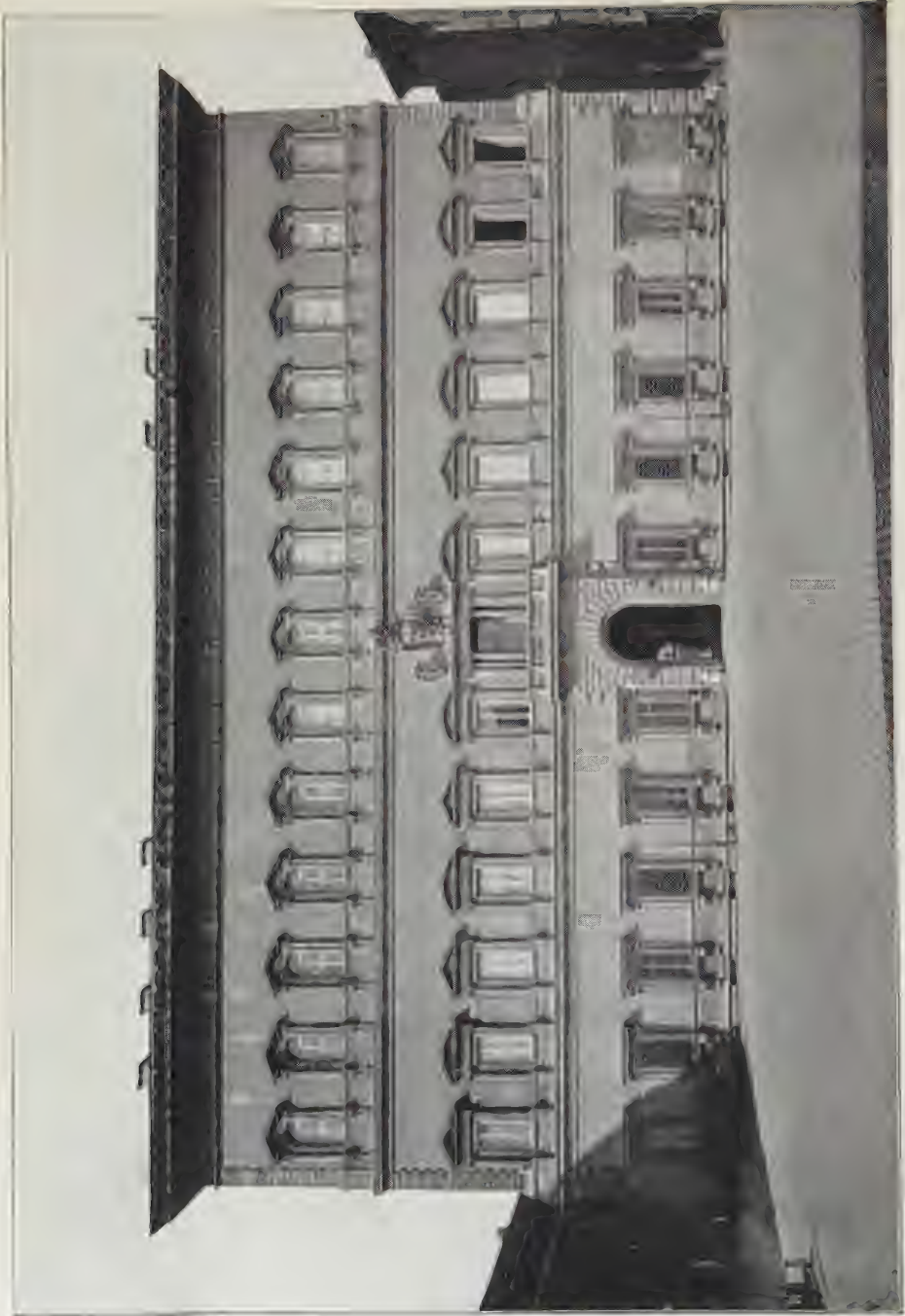
THE PAULINE CHAPEL—FARNESE PALACE—CAPITOL  
BUILDINGS, ETC. (1542-1549)

IT was during the years in which Michelangelo was engaged upon the 'Last Judgment' of the Sistine Chapel, that his acquaintance with Vittoria Colonna, the Marchesa di Pescara, ripened into a friendship which deeply influenced the character of a man who, deeply religious in the tone of his mind, and capable of warm affection, had yet gone through life without an inspiring friendship, and without interchange of his highest and his deepest longings with any other of his kind. This friendship with a woman of high character and noble mind is the one ray of sunshine that came to lighten the pathetic solitude of this man who lived alone with his thought and with his labour. And when, after some eighteen years, the friendship ended with the death of Vittoria, he was once more alone with himself. The influence was wholly good, and brought out that sense of chivalry and devotion in the man which he was apt to hide away in his dealings with men. It is therefore, not a little remarkable that the 'Last Judgment,' done in the years when this softening influence was most present in his life, should show no traces of it. That is a point which we must now leave where we have left it.

No sooner was the 'Last Judgment' completed than Paul III., delighted with the result, desired the master to paint in fresco the Cappella Paolina which Sangallo had lately built within the Vatican. The subjects were to be the 'Crucifixion of St. Peter' (Plate LXXIV.), and the 'Conversion of St. Paul.' It is evident that the task had no attractions for the painter. He was harassed in mind, the question of the Tomb of Julius, though nearer to its final settlement, still hanging over him. He was fatigued in body and complained that fresco painting was not for old men. The court officials, unable to conceive that great thought cannot always be summoned on the appearance of a great commission,



THE CRUCIFIXION OF ST. PETER



PALAZZO FARNESE, ROME



## THE PAULINE CHAPEL

and that an artist is often doing most when he is doing least, hurried and worried him. He answers testily in one of his letters, written in 1542, that they do not know that 'a man works with his brain as well as with his hands.' In another he has to tell them that it is idle for them to urge him to work—it will be at least four to six days before the very plaster, *l'arriciatura*, would be dry enough. It was not every one who knew how to handle Michelangelo, and these court officials had not the elements of the art. They merely excited his impatience and irritated his nerves, and he had not always the remedy at hand which he had applied to Biagio. He was ill and overwrought towards the end of his work in the Sistine, and suffered there from a dangerous fall from the scaffold. It would have been well to let him alone for a while. And the frescoes of the Pauline, by common consent the least impressive of his works, are the result of forcing a weary man to work which needed to be preceded by rest of brain. The sense, which is so present in his greatest works, of a thought struck out in its fulness and completion from an eager and inventive brain is wanting here. Rather is the sense of fatigue and of mechanical production present in its place. It is true that injury by fire and worse injury by restorers who have almost wholly repainted it, make it impossible to criticise the handiwork of the master now hidden under the work of others, or lost by the action of time. But the verdict by which the world has allowed these frescoes to pass into comparative forgetfulness is not upon the whole to be contradicted. The frescoes of the Paolina occupied him between 1542 (the 'Last Judgment' was finished in 1541) and 1549, by which latter date he had reached the age of seventy-four. It will be well to quote extracts from Vasari's description:—'Pope Paul had caused to be built, as has been said in the life of Antonio da Sangallo, on the same floor, a chapel called the Paolina, in imitation of that of Nicholas v.' (in which are Angelico's frescoes) 'in which he determined that Michelangelo should make two great stories in two pictures: in one he made the "Conversion of St. Paul" with Jesus Christ in the air and a multitude of angels nude, with most beautiful movements.' From this it is evident that the same process had been applied to these frescoes as to the 'Last Judgment' figures:—the angels are now partially draped, and so also the figures of the soldiers and others throughout the work which were probably once completely nude. Vasari then gives us a passage which is of the greatest interest to us as showing his own observation of a characteristic (curiously contradicted by Condivi) which marks the work of the master. 'Michelangelo

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attended only ' as has been said elsewhere, ' to the perfection of art ' (by which expression Vasari implies the study of the human form) ' since there are neither landscapes, nor trees, nor houses.<sup>1</sup> Nor are there seen there any varieties nor fantasies of art, to which he never gave attention as one who perhaps was not willing to abase that great genius of his to such matters. These were the last paintings carried out by him, at the age of seventy-five, and, according to what he told me, with great fatigue ; inasmuch as painting, when a certain age is past, and especially work in fresco, is not an art for old men.' And so, as Vasari says, when Michelangelo had put his last touch to the frescoes of the Paolina, he laid aside his brushes to take them up no more.

But the years between 1542 and 1550, which saw the completion of these frescoes, were, for the master, full of other distracting interests, occupations and cares, many of them entirely of his own summoning. Indeed, in spite of the fatigue of old age, there is no period when his life showed such incessant, almost feverish activity. The eagerness of his brain led him perpetually to undertake new work while the burden of that which was unaccomplished still lay upon him. His strong views upon all that concerned art, and the nervous energy of his temperament caused him to throw himself into questions which brought him into dispute with brother artists, in which he did not show himself at his best. He was at this time, as age and ill-health increased his nervous irritability, more than ever impatient of opposition ; and he came to regard even a difference of opinion as a proof of wilful hostility. It is impossible not to see that his opinion had on all matters come to be regarded as oracular, and that he had himself become to some extent the spoilt child of the Pope.

In the year 1544 we hear of him as laid low by serious illness, when, by the good services of Luigi del Riccio, he was rescued from the discomfort of his studio in the Macello dei Corvi,<sup>2</sup> and was nursed in the house of Roberto, son of Filippo Strozzi the Florentine, and of that outspoken lady Clarice dei Medici, the aunt of Alessandro. It was in gratitude for this kindness that he presented to Roberto the two ' Prisoners,' now in the Louvre—those sad derelicts from the first great design of the Julian Tomb. He is still in his sick-room when we find him writing to Francis I., promising to erect to him a

<sup>1</sup> Vasari here made a slip ; one of the frescoes shows a city on a hill.

<sup>2</sup> The buildings in which this studio was situated were removed when space was required for the monument to Victor Emmanuel : the name, however, still belongs to a fragment of the street which leads out of the Foro Traiano.

## OTHER COMMISSIONS

full-sized equestrian statue in bronze, if he will restore the liberties of Florence. Happily for the peace of Italy the French king did not fall in with this strange bargain. But a few years later, in 1546, we find Francis himself asking for something from the master's hand: to which Michelangelo made the quaint reply that he was too busy and too old to see much hope to carry out the king's desire in this life. But if there should be place for sculpture or for painting in the life to come, he would not fail him there. 'where men do not any more grow old.' It was rare for Michelangelo to set aside a commission, but by the time that that answer was written he had St. Peter's on the brain. Meanwhile, recovered from his illness of 1544, he was at once involved in a painful dispute with Antonio da Sangallo. Cardinal Alexander Farnese, before he had been elected Pope, had determined to rebuild the family palace in the Campo del Fiore, and had employed Sangallo, the most capable artist of his day. After his election to the Papacy he resolved to continue the building of the palace as a home for his two sons, on a more magnificent scale. In 1544 the building had already been raised two stories high, and the third story with its necessary cornice remained to be completed. Sangallo's design has perished, and we are unable to say what form that very able architect proposed for this portion of his task. But we suddenly find Michelangelo called in to make a report on Sangallo's plan, which he did in so trenchant and vehement a style, that if its criticisms were just and necessary—a matter on which evidence is wanting—the wording can only be called needlessly severe. Sangallo had good reason to feel aggrieved, the more so when in his presence a set of designs for the cornice by Michelangelo himself, by Giorgio Vasari, Sebastiano del Piombo, and others of inferior calibre, but all of Michelangelo's following, were examined by the Pope. The design of Michelangelo was preferred, but it is uncertain whether Sangallo proceeded to the mortifying task of carrying out the design of another, or whether during the short time that was to elapse before his death the work stood still. But in 1545 the two men were once more brought into opposition. The fortifications of the Leonine City had remained in evil case since the sack of Rome by the troops of the Constable de Bourbon—whom Benvenuto Cellini claims to have slain. The task of reconstructing the defences had been given by Paul to Antonio da Sangallo acting under a council of experts, of whom Pier Luigi Farnese was president. There were grave doubts in this council as to the details of the plan, especially in the neighbourhood of the



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newly built Porta Santo Spirito.<sup>1</sup> Michelangelo had been appointed—possibly for this very emergency—consulting architect, and at a meeting at which the Pope was present he expressed himself with such freedom that Sangallo reminded him that, sculptor and painter as he was, he was not an engineer. This was fuel to the flame. Michelangelo appealed to his experience at San Miniato and to his long study of the subject, and claimed that he knew more than Sangallo and all of his put together. What else he said or the affronted Sangallo replied we are left to conjecture, but the Pope found it necessary to close the unseemly scene by abruptly dismissing the council. One is sorry to find Michelangelo a little later offering to the commissioners to take on the work himself, and when a year later Sangallo died at Terni of malaria, he was spared thereby, one cannot doubt, many a chagrin that would have fallen to his lot. Michelangelo himself in the early months of that same year of 1546 lay at death's door, and was indeed reported in Rome as dead. But before the year was out the Pope had appointed him successor to Sangallo as architect of the Farnese, of St. Peter's, and of the fortifications of the Papal City. From this last charge he was practically relieved a year later by the appointment of Castriotto d'Urbino, a military expert, to supervise the Papal fortifications.

Meanwhile his private affairs were not without anxiety. The death in 1547 of the Duke Pier Luigi Farnese finally deprived him of the revenues of a ferry on the Po near Piacenza—a loss which was probably a blessing in disguise, since the anxiety of the property had been out of all proportion to its gains; but he seems, from a letter to his nephew, to have felt the loss, as he had, in accepting the office of architect to St. Peter's, stipulated that it should be without salary. But this and all other such anxieties were forgotten in the presence of his great sorrow when, in the February of 1547, Vittoria Colonna died. She had been to him the one friend of his life who had been enough in sympathy with his nature and his ideals to allow of a true exchange of thought between them. Other friends he certainly had, and kindness was showered upon him throughout his life, so great was the value that was set upon him. But a certain aloofness, which made it impossible for him to impart his innermost thoughts to another save on those very rare occasions when his heart was for a moment unlocked, had made him always a solitary and, in the truest

<sup>1</sup> This fine gate, the work of Sangallo, still spans the Via Lungara, leading from the Borgo Santo Spirito along the Tiber to Sta. Maria in Trastevere.

## PALAZZO FARNESE

sense, a friendless man. It was perhaps during the time that followed on this loss that the resolution took deep root in his mind that he would make St. Peter's the crowning work of his life. He seems in all sincerity, when all unworthy jealousies had been set aside, when the warmth of conflict had burnt itself out, and when he found himself face to face with his great task, to have seen in it a sacred mission. His letters to his nephew Lionardo, and to those who sought in later years to induce him to return to Florence, leave no doubt upon this point. Henceforth he braced himself to this great purpose with an energy as splendid as any that he had shown in his youth, and in face of the suffering which a painful internal disease now added to the ordinary troubles of old age, *i difetti della vecchiezza*, of which he speaks so often.

Of the works of these years, one need notice in any detail but two. The first of these is the Palazzo Farnese, which amongst the palaces of Rome has, as the visible expression of the magnificence of the Roman ecclesiastical noble, no equal in spite of defects which in any building of the size it is always a cheap task to detect. From what has already been said, it will be felt that it is most unjust to Sangallo, who had carried the building so far towards completion, to assign all the glory, as is so often done, to Michelangelo. To the latter belongs the upper story and the rich cornice which crowns it, and without question he who is in search of defects will find them in the windows of that upper story more surely than in any other part of the building, while at the same time he will find in the cornice the feature which gives its richness and picturesque sense of affluent splendour to the stately and simple front below. Antonio Sangallo<sup>1</sup> had designed a lower story consisting of twelve square-headed windows and a central porch: while the story above contains the same number of windows surmounted alternately by angular and curved pediments. These windows are of admirable proportion. There is no enrichment to this part of the front save in the string courses which divide story from story. Michelangelo carried up the third story, using windows corresponding in position to those below, and surmounted by angular pediments, but of less agreeable proportions, longer in proportion to their breadth owing to his use of a round head to his windows. These have been fiercely criticised, and certainly if one of them be regarded

<sup>1</sup> It is distressing to remember that Alessandro Farnese plundered both the Colosseum and the theatre of Marcellus to provide the material for his palace. To what extent Sangallo acquiesced, or whether he made any protest, is not recorded. Nor does Michelangelo's opinion survive.

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by itself it produces no particular sense of beauty. But the use of these plain, almost obtrusively plain, windows and their pediments in that somewhat stern façade which so far had received so little enrichment, is of calculated, and rightly calculated, effect. It is the plain simplicity of the whole façade leaving plenty of open wall space, in which the severe but strongly defined windows are set, that makes the one piece of really gorgeous enrichment, reserved for the crowning cornice, tell with such unexampled effect. The façade is an object-lesson in the great principle—of which Sangallo as well as Michelangelo showed full knowledge—that if you will have real richness you must obtain it out of ornament set sparingly upon the sternest simplicity. It was no new lesson this in Art. The Lombards<sup>1</sup> in their architecture knew it even better than any who came after. But it is a principle that in many periods of Art has been strangely ignored, and never more so than in the architecture of the later Renaissance and the style that followed it. No better illustration can be found than if the reader will walk a few hundred yards to the Palazzo Madama, built in its present form for Caterina dei Medici.<sup>2</sup> Like the Farnese it is a plain front divided into stories by courses, having its windows similarly disposed and surmounted by the same pediments. But the architect has sought to obtain richness by a copious use of ornament—and has obtained only a sense of floridity. Ornament is plentifully spread over the middle range, where shell and ram's head and fruit are sculptured on each lintel, while the jambs are decorated with roll patterns ending in heads of men and women. The attic has its windows framed with a rich border, and *putti* with alternate lions and suits of armour to play with between each pair of windows. The cornice above makes no impression. The façade is wholly wanting in the simplicity of the Farnese, but it is still more wanting in that strange sense of richness which that one piece of effective ornament, the cornice of Michelangelo, throws over the whole. The comparison is a fair one, since the Madama is admittedly a good example of a Roman palace of its date.

Fault has been found with this cornice that it is a merely picturesque addition, representing no necessity of the structure, conceived in the spirit of the painter rather than of the architect and serving no direct purpose of utility, but merely one of added ornament. He who has been caught in a storm in an Italian town will not have

<sup>1</sup> I use this title, of course, not to define a nationality but a style.

<sup>2</sup> 1542, by the Florentine Giovanni Stefano Marucelli.







PALAZZO DEI CONSERVATORI, CAPITOL, ROME

## THE CAPITOL BUILDINGS

failed to discover the purpose that these cornices serve. They are as useful to the passer-by, and as valuable in preserving the face of a building in its upper portions, at any rate, as the enormous eaves of Nuremberg or Hildesheim. But that Michelangelo did design his ornament in the spirit of the painter rather than in that of the mediæval architect—that is to say, as ornament added to a surface rather than as ornament growing out of structure, must be at once admitted. It is in the light of the architecture of the late Renaissance that we have to view his buildings. And there is in this Palazzo Farnese a sense of grandeur, which, as in other of his works, silences the criticism that rises so easily to the lips. He had, after his appointment as its master-builder, designed a second court at the back or river front, with a bridge spanning the Tiber to the Trastevere. The death of Pier Luigi, followed soon after by that of his father Paul III., ended that proposal, and the great central arcades or loggie in three orders after the Roman manner, which overlook the garden and the river, were added by Giacomo della Porta.

Within this period, too, though the date of its commencement is uncertain, falls another great architectural achievement, the designing *arch* of the buildings which now crown the Capitol on the northern side, farthest from the Forum. This work was entrusted to him by a society which existed in Rome for the worthy adornment of the city, and was a task after Michelangelo's own heart, though he was already too deeply engaged, and perhaps also the inflow of the funds of that patriotic society was too gradual, to allow of a rapid progress of the project, which embraced the rebuilding of the Palace of the Senators of Rome, and the erection of the museum of the Capitol to the left, and of the Palace of the Conservators to the right. Hither in 1538 had been brought from St. John Lateran the bronze statue of Marcus Aurelius which stands now on a pedestal of the master's designing. Behind the statue rises the great Palace of the Senators which stretches across the Piazza, blocking out the view of the Forum, and resting partly, on the southern side, on the foundation and lower wall of the ancient Tabularium. The marble staircase, flanked below by the statues of the Tiber and the Nile, was completed from Michelangelo's plan,<sup>1</sup> but the upper portion, completed by Girolamo Rainaldi

<sup>1</sup> A woodcut published in Venice in 1565, one year after the master's death, shows the staircase *in situ* and completed. The upper portion of the Senators' Palace, as seen in the cut, has not yet undergone alteration.



at the end of the century, has undergone some change of design. Of the palaces on either hand, that of the Conservatori was partly erected in the master's lifetime, but finished after his death, and may be taken as following tolerably closely his design, while the Capitoline Museum, which was left unbuilt till a century later, visibly follows, with very slight changes, the same elevation, and is therefore rightly reckoned to the master.

At once as we look at either palace built upon his design the finger can be laid as before on a defect of principle. The eight Corinthian pilasters which run up the piers, dividing the elevation into seven bays, should doubtless, in stern propriety, flank or support the roof of a building of one single individual story. So would they have been used, if used at all, in an ancient temple. But here, while the pilasters run unbroken from pedestal to cornice, the space between is divided into two visible floors, the upper pierced with windows, the lower an open arcade. This incongruity has been since repeated in thousands of instances throughout Europe, but it is unjust to accuse Michelangelo of having originated it. To take only a single example to the contrary: Sangallo himself in his design for St. Peter's, prepared thirty years before these buildings were set up, had introduced between the huge pilasters that externally surround the tribunes two windows, which would give the impression that they are lighting a double-storied building. And other instances might be quoted from the work of other architects, though from none so likely to be of overwhelming influence as our master.<sup>1</sup> Such incongruities and such false relationship between structure and ornament are inevitable where the classical style—least suited of any to the needs of modern public or private life—is adopted for modern buildings. But granting the incongruity, it is difficult not to admire the fine proportion, the dignity and the suitability to their grand position of the buildings with which Michelangelo crowned the Capitol Hill. If the classical style in a wholly different age is to be pardoned anywhere, then it must surely be in Rome itself. If anywhere in Rome, then surely on the Capitol; and if from any hand, then from that of the master who alone possessed that sense of largeness and dignity which, though it led him to set aside many considerations in obtaining it, yet entitled him before all architects whom we know to crown a noble classical site with classical buildings. If the reader, be he architect or amateur, will in some early morning before the mass of carriages has blocked

<sup>1</sup> The instance of St. Paul's, London, will at once occur to the reader.

## THE CAPITOL BUILDINGS

the Piazza take his stand near the top of the great incline which leads to the upper platform, he will find that the purist which is in him has had to give way, and that criticism becomes silent before this stately arrangement of buildings on one of the stateliest sites in the world.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### ST. PETER'S

*' . . . e questa diligenza ho sempre usato e uso perchè, come molti credono, e io ancora esservi stato messo da Dio.'*—Letter to his nephew Lionardo, July 1, 1557.

THE ancient basilica of St. Peter's in Rome, known as San Pietro in Vaticano, was, up to the end of the fifteenth century, before the great wave of reform had swept over Europe, the building upon earth to which, next after the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, the eyes of the Christian world looked with most reverence. Tradition assigned its first foundation to Constantine the Great, though an earlier oratory has stood here to mark the resting-place, by common belief, of the bones of St. Peter. The great basilica with its nave and its four aisles had, in spite of restorations at intervals, some of which had almost amounted to rebuilding, in the days of Nicolas v. (1447-1455) once more reached a dangerous condition—or at least the irrepressible zeal for building of that great Pope tempted him to think so. He resolved to rebuild the basilica on a far larger scale, and to that end he employed the celebrated Florentine architect and sculptor Bernardo Gambarelli, known as Rossellino, and probably also Leon Battista Alberti,<sup>1</sup> both of whom were already engaged in the great works of building and fortification which Nicolas had set on foot. Bernardo prepared plans and models which even in Vasari's days had disappeared, and when the Pope died in 1455 the building had only risen a few feet above the ground in the neighbourhood of the tribune. There is little doubt that by this first ground-plan St. Peter's was to have been again a basilica-shaped church, having probably as before the long nave and four aisles, with a semicircular tribune or choir, separated from the nave by a great hall surmounted by a cupola. If Alberti had any considerable share in the plan we may

<sup>1</sup> Vasari in his life of Bernardo Rossellino does not mention Alberti as having had any share in the first design for St. Peter's; nor again in the life of Alberti himself, though he enumerates other works by him in Rome.







ST. PETER'S FROM THE PIAZZA, ROME

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perhaps find in his fine church of Sant' Andrea at Mantua, though built on a much smaller scale and with only two aisles, the type on which St. Peter's would have been modelled. If this view is right, it will be presently seen that from Rossellino and Alberti to Michelangelo every architect—there were nine in all—who had a share in the designs for the church, proposed to crown it with a cupola. Fifty years went by and saw six Popes come and go, but the great design for the new St. Peter's found no favour in their eyes. It was for Julius II., a man of mind almost as masterful and as full of project as Nicolas himself, to resume in far larger shape the forgotten scheme. Michelangelo's design for the great Tomb of Julius was the direct cause of the Pope's resolution; it is a strange chance which links the master's name both with the inception and the crowning glory of the great church. The 'Tomb,' as we have recorded, was in the first instance designed to stand in St. Peter's in the choir or chief tribune, unattached to wall or pier, free passage being allowed all round it. This it was which gave to Julius the further idea of celebrating his Papacy by an entire rebuilding of the church. Vasari tells us, and it is quite probable, that the scheme was suggested to Julius and strongly urged by Giuliano da Sangallo, who was bitterly disappointed when the commission was given to Bramante, at that time architect to the Vatican Palace. Bramante utilised the portion of the tribune which Rossellino had left behind him. His ground-plan was a cross of the shape known as 'Greek,'<sup>1</sup> having four equal arms each with a semicircular ending (representing four tribunes or apses) enclosed within a square. The central space was to be covered with a cupola of great size, the centre of this space being the centre of the building; that is to say, a pair of compasses placed with one arm on this centre and the other on the extreme point of any one of the semicircular tribunes, will touch the circumference of the remaining three. The plan, so far as the west<sup>2</sup> or tribune end of the church is concerned, will be found to reappear in its main features but with modifications in all the subsequent plans, including the final form of the building as we have it; but most unhappily the Greek cross was finally abandoned forty years after Michelangelo's death in favour of the Latin cross, giving the present long nave. Bramante's first plan, which Peruzzi and

<sup>1</sup> But he seems to have had an alternative scheme for a Latin cross.

<sup>2</sup> It must be remembered that the high altar and the tribunes are at the west end of St. Peter's, the portico at the east end: the orientation which is almost universal in our northern churches having never prevailed in Italy.



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Michelangelo returned to, was one of great beauty, which not only would have given full effect to the great cupola from the outside, but would have saved the building from some at least of the defects which are now so conspicuous. The majesty of the great dome would have made itself felt as the spectator entered the building, and the difficulty of dealing with the height of the five great nave arches—a difficulty which has been ill met by the huge Corinthian pilasters and cornice fastened on to the massive piers—would never have occurred. Bramante has left us an example of one of his domed buildings in the *Tempietto*, or little Temple, in the Court of San Pietro in Montorio, Rome, which proves his capacity to have carried out his church and cupola, if so it had been fated, with very beautiful result. The *Tempietto* is indeed in miniature suggestive of the plan which he developed for St. Peter's. The fierce attack which Michelangelo, in presence of Pope Julius, made upon Bramante, was not aimed at any defects in the beauty of his plan but at the incompetence—according to the speaker—with which it was carried out.<sup>1</sup> It had been, Michelangelo asserted, so hastily and badly done that the piers were incapable of supporting the weight that was to be placed upon them. It is not possible for us now to judge of the truth of the charges which Michelangelo, in his anger, hurled at the older architect. None but an expert with the whole of the evidence, plans, sections, and elevations, before him could decide the question—and no such evidence is possible. Geymüller remarks that the piers of the 'great hall' could hardly have been in a very bad state, since Raphael proposed to place upon them without further strengthening an even larger cupola than Bramante had intended. This, however, might, after all, only prove that Raphael was, in the matter of structure, equally or more incompetent. But it must, in that context, be remembered that when he in 1514 became architect he had with him one of the most capable engineers of the day, Fra Giocondo, to whom as to Raphael Michelangelo's charges were well known, and by whom they would surely have been carefully weighed. And the proved capacity of Bramante as a master of structure makes us doubtful whether Michelangelo may not have spoken over hastily, or else perhaps had in his mind a cupola of far more overwhelming size (such as he eventually placed there) than

<sup>1</sup> Michelangelo was also extremely indignant at the ruthless destruction of over seventy tombs, whose wreckage was dispersed through the churches of Rome, huddled in the crypt where they may now be seen, or handed over to the lime-burner. This, however, does not touch the architectural question.



ST. PETER'S FROM TORREDINONA, ROME





## ST. PETER'S

Bramante had projected. Certainly as we see them on the ground-plan, Bramante's *piloni* or piers would not have carried Michelangelo's cupola. Is it quite certain—it is accepted by most writers—that they really would not have carried Bramante's? Be this how it may—we cannot now decide it; it even depends somewhat on the quality of the workmanship—it is certain that to Bramante is due far greater praise for his original conception of the building, as Michelangelo himself, by his own words and by the adoption of Bramante's ground-plan generously admitted, than we are wont to give him. When he died in 1514 Raphael was appointed architect (not yet head architect),<sup>1</sup> with Giovanni da Verona, known as Fra Giocondo, and poor Giuliano da Sangallo, to whom the honour came too late. The latter went away to die at Florence in 1515, and his share in the building may be ignored. Fra Giocondo, on the other hand, through his engineering capacity, was during the short time in which he held office of great value to Raphael, supplying probably the very deficiency which must surely have been felt by the painter in such a task. Geymüller publishes a plan by Fra Giocondo for St. Peter's, but it is not certain that this belongs to the period of his official position as architect. It may have been made informally at an earlier date, or even at the time when the project was first mooted, before the appointment of Bramante. Fra Giocondo died on 1st July, 1515, and Giuliano da Sangallo in the same year, and Raphael was appointed head architect. In 1517 Antonio da Sangallo was joined with him as 'architect,' being in 1518 promoted to a higher income and with it to a higher condition of responsibility. Raphael changed Bramante's beautiful plan into a Latin or long-shafted cross, having a long nave towards the east, but the tribunes and portions surrounding the great hall below the cupola underwent no radical change beyond a variation in the shape of the piers and in the disposition of the chapels and sacristies with reference to the tribunes. Nor does the work appear to have been pushed forward with great vigour, and Vasari, mentioning the promotion of Antonio Sangallo in 1518, says that the building progressed 'coldly enough' (*assai freddamente*). When Raphael died in 1520 Sangallo became head architect, and with him was joined Baldassare Peruzzi of Siena, who worked till 1527, and again, after a slight interval, from 1531 to 1533; and, finally, in 1536, one year before his death, he was reappointed and placed on an equal footing with Sangallo. He had before Bramante's death worked for a time in his office.

<sup>1</sup> Raphael seems to have been appointed architect in the last year of Bramante's lifetime.

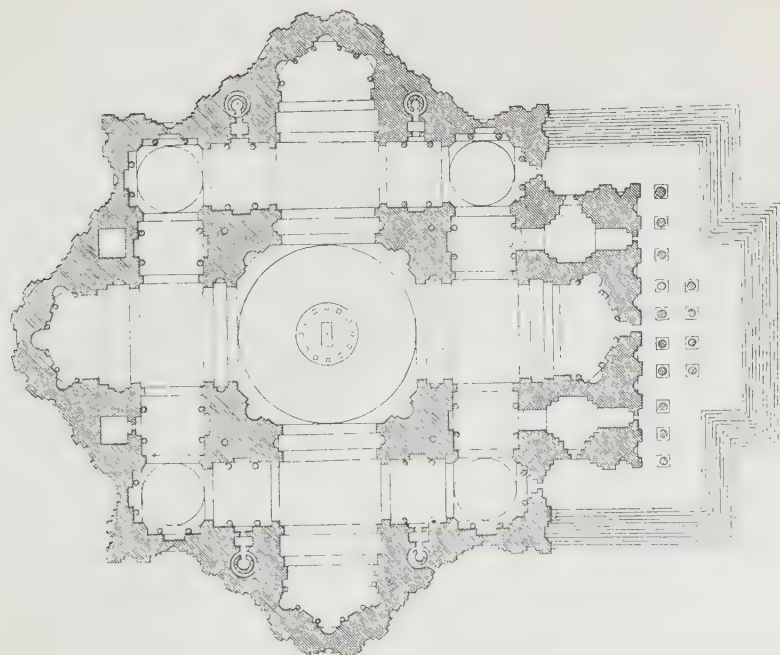
## MICHELANGELO

Among his drawings are trial designs<sup>1</sup> for a church of Latin cross shape—evident endeavours to continue the plan of Raphael—but he eventually abandoned this attempt and returned to Bramante's Greek cross. The ground-plan which he left based on this system is of great promise. It retains the great hall of the cupola, with the four equal-sized tribunes opening into it, and adds to the four corners of the square which encloses them four square sacristies which were to have been crowned by four smaller cupolas, *cupolette*. The ground-plan has fine qualities, but, in greatly increasing the strength and bulk of the piers throughout, Peruzzi would seem to have planned a building which would have been somewhat overcrowded with masonry beneath the dome in comparison to its free ground space.

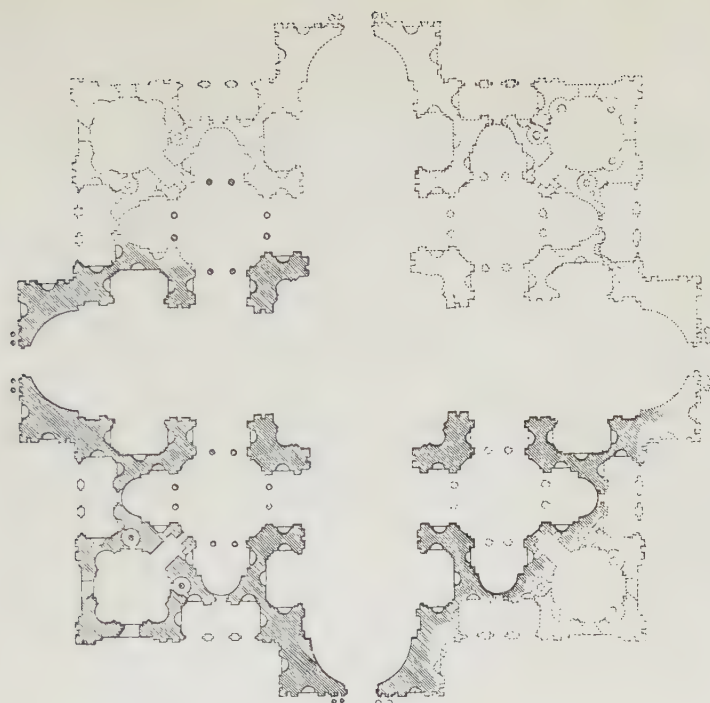
Antonio Sangallo, on taking office as head architect, drew up a memorandum in many heads, in which he criticised the plan of Raphael in terms almost as severe as those in which his own subsequent designs were to be condemned by Michelangelo. He spoke of Raphael's long, narrow nave as resembling a dark lane; ridiculed the openings between the chapels as resembling holes for cannon, and especially found fault with the proportions of the Doric capitals of the extended pilasters—a point whose importance we shall see later. The memorandum paved the way for the changes which were now to be made.

Meanwhile Sangallo, as his drawings testify, had also made many trials before he finally adopted the general plan of a Greek cross united by a slightly increased lower arm, or short nave, to a transverse portico or façade which, stretching across the east end of the building, was almost equal in length to that of the entire church from east to west. The model and elevation of this design still exist. The façade shows a well-proportioned and orderly arrangement of porticoes and galleries flanked by two campanili composed of tiers set one above the other with supporting columns and pilasters to each tier and surmounted by steeples. Viewed from the front the cupola would have been seen between the two belfries raised upon its two drums, the upper smaller than the other, both surrounded by colonnades, while the lantern above, of greater height than the actual cupola, repeats the circular drum shape with surrounding columns. The elevation, harmonious and free from striking fault or offence, is yet wholly wanting in the

<sup>1</sup> Geymüller, *Projets Primitifs de S. Pierre*, pl. 26, publishes these ground-plans, but refers them to the time when Peruzzi was a draughtsman in Bramante's office. In this view they would be records of Bramante's alternative scheme.



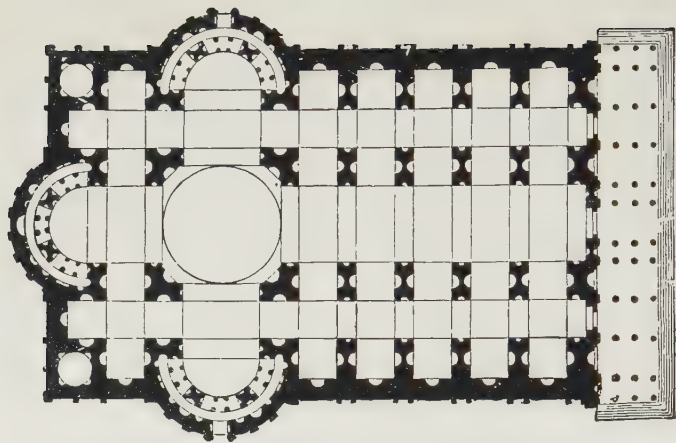
MICHELANGELO'S PLAN



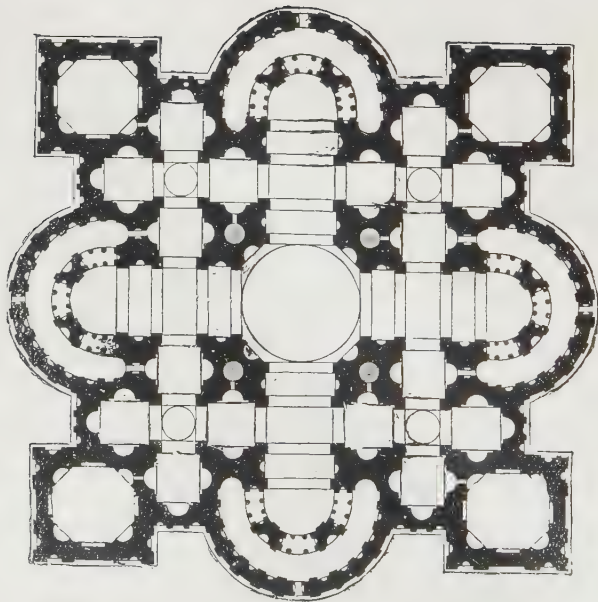
BRAMANTE'S PLAN

ST. PETER'S, ROME





RAPHAEL'S PLAN



ST. PETER'S, ROME

FERRUZZI'S PLAN

## ST. PETER'S

elements of largeness and impressiveness which, with all its faults, the actual building possesses. Vasari, whose instinct was so often right, while his reasons are so often wrong, condemns the façade on the strange ground that it resembled rather a Gothic building than the purer style (classical) now in use by architects. He meant no doubt that Sangallo, piling portico on portico, arcade upon arcade, and templet upon templet, to make his façade, his cupola, and his campanili conform with one another, had, with wearisome repetition, multiplied unmeaning features. But nothing could well be less Gothic than Sangallo's elevation of St. Peter's. We cannot escape the conviction as we look at it that Wren, at a later date, was greatly impressed by it. One of these campanili, surmounting a church upon the banks of the Thames, would not seem to us as out of place there, so familiar have we been made through Wren's work and style with the methods of Sangallo.

When, in 1546, Antonio da Sangallo died at Terni, he had, considering that he had been associated with the building for nearly thirty years, and had been chief architect for twenty-eight years, certainly made progress 'coldly enough.' He had on taking office complained of the grievous waste of money which had taken place in Bramante's and Raphael's time, and he was doubtless fully justified, but he does not appear to have possessed the strength of character, found presently in Michelangelo, to arrest the jobbery and the officialism which were at the bottom of it; still less does he seem to have had the vigour and push which in so long a term of office should have sufficed to complete the plan and to connect his name with St. Peter's in its final shape. When Michelangelo, in 1547, became sole architect, St. Peter's was to all intents and purposes still to build. The four great piers of the cupola, strengthened and enlarged since Bramante's day, were in their place, and the three tribunes opening out of the great hall had taken shape, together with some of the adjacent chapels. Sangallo had raised the floor considerably, thus burying the lower parts of the piers, and he substituted, it is believed, the bases on the present level in the parts about the cupola. It is not possible to ascertain the exact height which the cupola piers had reached at this date.

Michelangelo, as we have said, was appointed sole architect in 1547. He at once set to work in characteristic fashion. Having refused all payment for his services from the moment of his acceptance of office, he had placed himself in a position which enabled him to use a strong hand in checking the dishonesty and corruption which, he was convinced, had for a long time past stood in the way of the com-

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pletion of St. Peter's. There is no reason to think that Sangallo was any party to these misdoings, or that he derived any benefit from them. He had merely lacked the force of character to make head against them. Michelangelo at once showed to the army of discontented officials that he was a master who was to be obeyed. Hitherto the building of St. Peter's had been a happy hunting-ground for jobbing contractors, for lazy workmen, and for peculating clerks-of-the-works and foremen. To one of these latter, guilty of passing bad material (cement), he wrote in terms which do not err on the side of obscurity: the delinquent was sternly bidden in future to reject all inferior material 'even if it came from heaven.' He showed himself not merely capable of assuming the direction of most difficult technical building problems which several of the previous architects had been content to leave to subordinates, but showed an intimate practical knowledge of detail, which soon told the heads of the departments that they were now dealing with a master-builder who was no longer in their hands. He speedily earned among them that unpopularity which is often the best measure of the degree in which a man is doing his duty. Discontent soon made itself felt. It is pretty evident, indeed, that Michelangelo, who had right entirely on his side in his crusade against the jobbers of his day, was high-handed also in his treatment of the committee of deputies appointed to check, in a double sense, the proceedings of the architect. Michelangelo held a shrewd opinion of the value of committees in directing works of art, and he showed it in a practical, though not perhaps in strictly regulation manner, by keeping these injured officials in contemptuous darkness as to his plans and proceedings. They did not know, they protested at last to the Pope, what was being done, nor how the money was being spent, nor what plans were being carried out. The architect took no notice of their injured dignity. It must be admitted that he was wise with a view to the completion of his work; but he was, perhaps, one cannot say certainly, herein not within his rights. Moreover, in his contempt for the *Setta Sangallesca* as he christened the discontented who opposed him—without, it is to be feared, much discrimination or reserve—he needlessly made enemies. The deputies, after saying that they knew nothing whatever of his plans, unluckily stultified their statement by adding that they wholly disapproved of them, and proceeded to appoint Nanni di Baccio Bigio—the incompetent architect of the Ponte Rotto, a sworn enemy of Michelangelo, as their spokesman. Michelangelo went straight to the Pope and tendered his resignation. The inquiry



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which followed triumphantly vindicated the action and proceedings of the master, and Nanni was summarily sent about his business. But the matter did not end here. Once more, in 1560, the deputies, whose view it is quite easy to understand, sent formal protest that since Michelangelo had been made architect in 1547 they had been mere parrots, unable to exercise any control over the architect or the building. They had, from their point of view, a just ground of complaint: they were a committee who had sat for thirteen years without the possibility of exercising their powers. Michelangelo, on the other hand, pointed out in his indignant letter to Cardinal Carpi, that he had been appointed with sole and uncontrolled power over the design and carrying out of the fabric. He, too, was right in his contention. The fault lay with those who, granting uncontrolled power to the architect in his dealing with the fabric, had failed to annul the powers of a committee appointed to control. That to Michelangelo's high-handed carrying through of his purpose we owe the completion of his cupola, I cannot doubt. He has been seriously blamed, even by his admirers, for not adopting a conciliatory course towards this committee. That he was fierce and haughty with them one may well believe; but if he had, in a 'conciliatory spirit,' once submitted his plans detail by detail—and there was no half-way course open to him—to the judgment of the deputies, his plans would have ended where all previous plans had ended. It is not without amusement that we become aware that Michelangelo gave the world an object-lesson, not without its use in these days also, of the value of committees in deciding upon projects of art. But if he was able on the whole to regard the *impasse* in which he held his checking committee with a certain grim amusement, there were times when he was sorely troubled by the anxiety and physical toil at his age which the supervision of the building imposed upon him, and which the gossip of his enemies made hard to bear. He was deeply grieved, too, by the death, in 1555, of his faithful helper and right-hand man Urbino—a loss which he expresses in a very touching letter written at this time. It is evident that his friends saw how precarious the master's own life was at this period. They persuaded him, therefore, in 1557—it is impossible to be too grateful for their foresight—to prepare a model of his cupola so that it could be carried out to its details in case of his death. The model, executed by Giovanni Franzese, still exists, and it is to its preparation that we owe the completion of his cupola. If he could have been persuaded to add to it a model of the rest of his building and of his eastern portico, we should

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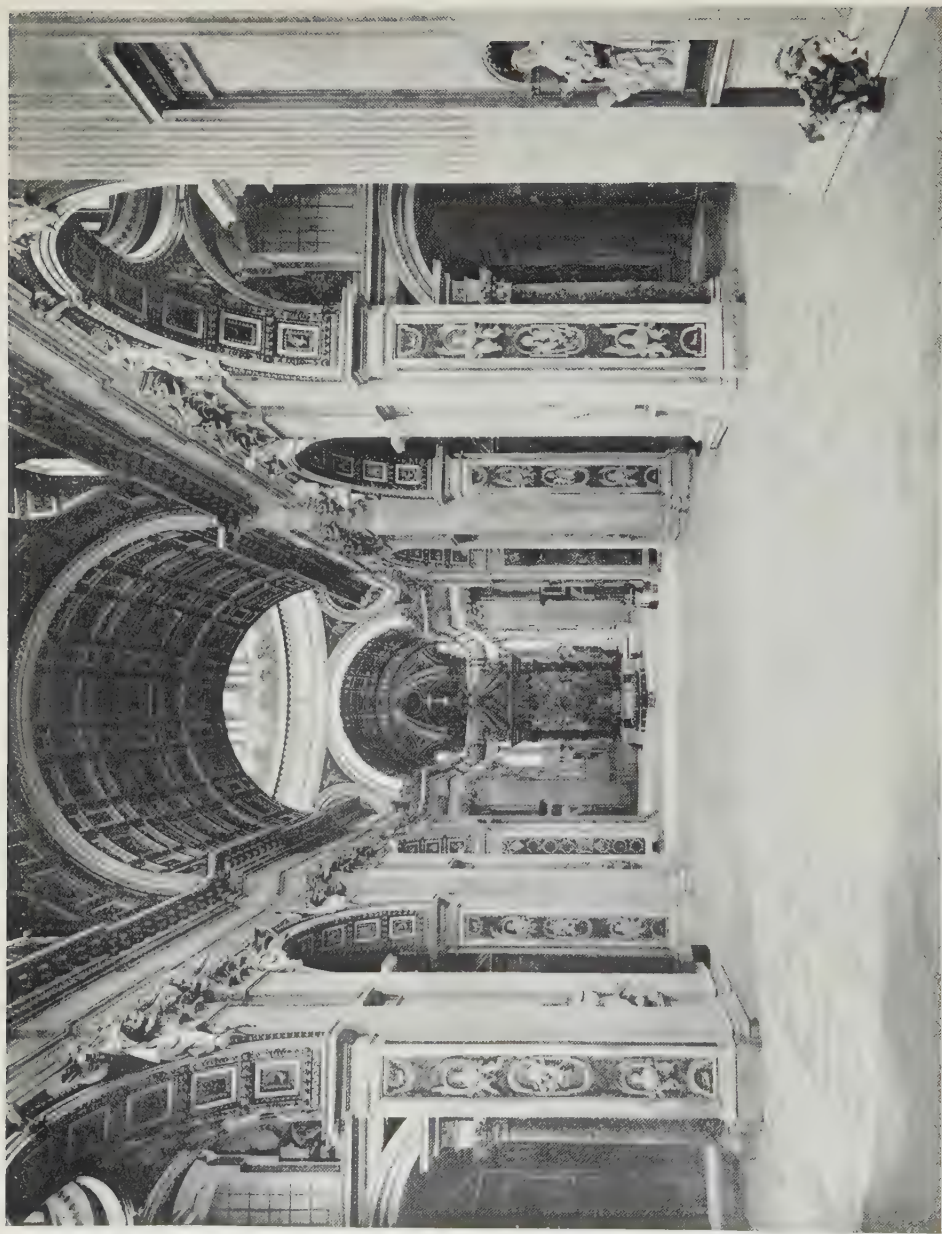
have been spared the disastrous changes which, forty years after his death, destroyed, by adding the long nave and the present façade, the unity of his plan.

— He had, on his appointment as architect, at once reverted to the Greek cross ground-plan of Bramante (Plate LXXIX.), for which, in a later letter to Bartolommeo Ammanati, he expresses warm admiration, saying that the great architect had laid down the first ground-plan (he does not count Rossellino's) in a clear and luminous fashion free from all confusion, and isolated from all interference to its lights from adjacent buildings. In Sangallo's plan he finds the contrary qualities. He complains of the darkness of the remote corners produced by his plan—affording opportunities to cut-throats, coiners (one wonders at this point if he writes in full earnest), and other evildoers. And he adds the noticeable comment that if Sangallo's plan is continued it will extend so far on the side towards the palace or north side that it will destroy the Pauline Chapel and other buildings, and perhaps even encroach on the Sistine Chapel itself. He advises the removal of some of Sangallo's work, and in answer to the objections on the ground of the sacrifice of so much work, he says that the stones can be used again and that if the apparent loss amounts to a few thousand ducats, the gain to the building would be two hundred thousands of scudi and three hundred years of time. These expressions can only imply that Sangallo had projected large extensions which so far had only been carried out on the south side farthest from the Vatican. It would have obviously been impossible for Michelangelo to express any doubt as to what might happen to the Sistine or predict the destruction of the Pauline if the buildings on that site were already in course of erection. It is evidently these external works on the south side which Michelangelo presently demolished: the deputies complained bitterly of his 'demolitions,' a phrase which cannot apply to his dealings with the piers, where he added enormous masses to the existing masonry, with a view of placing on them a cupola far greater than had been projected hitherto. It is in the light of this intention that his adoption of Bramante's Greek cross so strongly commends itself from every point of view. Had his design been carried through both externally and internally, the result would have been not merely a most noble cupola, but a most noble church. Internally, the effect of the incomparable dome would have made itself felt from every part of the building, adding to the reduction in size rather than detracting from the sense of vastness in the building because that vastness could have been comprehended immediately, and



CUPOLA OF ST. PETER'S, ROME  
(FROM THE WEST)





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without any process of reasoning in which the mind has to be called in to aid, by comparisons, the sense of sight. As we have already said, the great range of Corinthian pilasters upon the piers of the nave which now leave so unsatisfactory a feeling upon the mind, would not have been there: they are comparatively unobjectionable on the piers of the cupola, where the enormous space above them reduces them to due proportion. Externally, the gain would have been far greater. The lengthening of the nave and the placing of the huge façade at the present distance from the cupola make it impossible to see the beauty of the latter from any part of the piazza in front, so completely is it cut off by the upper outline of the portico; and to realise its true grandeur and symmetry one must seek a vantage point on the Pincian, the Aventine, or the hills at the back of St. Peter's.

It is evident that from the first moment of his appointment as architect, Michelangelo had resolved to crown his building with a cupola so majestic in its size and its design as to be worthy of the chief basilica of Christendom, for he at once commenced that strengthening of the four great piers which finally resulted in masses of masonry said to be sixty feet square, and solid enough to support with ease an even greater weight than they are called upon to bear. He had it in his mind, as he himself expressed it, to suspend the dome of the Pantheon in the air. Here was the feature on which he depended for his expression of vast and overwhelming dignity in his building; it is here, too, that it will be found. He regarded St. Peter's not so much as a house of prayer for the individual—the four hundred churches of Rome with almost as many minor oratories, and many times more shrines and stations and way-side crosses fulfilled that need in Rome of that day—but as the visible symbol of the greatness of the Christian Church, and as the great centre and heart—of its magnificence. His belief that it was his special mission from Heaven to carry this through has already been mentioned. That in his architecture, as in his sculpture and in his painting he sought to express always a great dominating thought of which he did not make others his partners, the reader will, I doubt not, have full assurance. He did not here, it is true, give utterance to his purpose—seldom indeed had he gone so far as he did in this case when he made confession of his simple belief in his great mission. But his meaning, when we know the manner of his mind, may be clearly read. St. Peter's was to be the greatest visible temple of God upon earth, and the dome the greatest visible symbol of His majesty.

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If we compare the model made in his lifetime with the existing cupola as it was finished five and twenty years or so after his death, the one great point of difference is at once seen to lie in the fact that the existing dome has but two skins—an inner vault and outer covering, each of a lofty egg-shaped section, with a space between which contains steps leading to the lantern, whereas the model contains a third vaulting considerably lower than the present vault, and necessarily of a more semi-circular section. It has been much debated whether the removal from the plan of this lower vault was due to the architects Vignola and Giacomo della Porta who completed the dome, or whether it was in accordance with Michelangelo's intention. I adopt the latter view, believing that the placing of the two vaults within the model was a tentative method giving good opportunity of choosing between the two plans. It is difficult to believe that Michelangelo proposed at any time to use both vaultings together with an outer covering, or three skins as they have been called. One of the vaults was surely to be removed and the strictness with which it was enjoined upon the architects who completed the dome that they were to carry out the plans of Michelangelo according to his model, seems to make it certain that they would not have made so striking a departure from his plan. The model with its two vaults was made in the master's own lifetime for the avowed purpose of leaving clear direction to those who came after him. It is most improbable, under these circumstances, that they should have been left in doubt as to which of the alternative schemes presented on the model he intended finally to adopt. I believe therefore that the shape of the inner vault as we now see it in St. Peter's was that which Michelangelo decided to use.

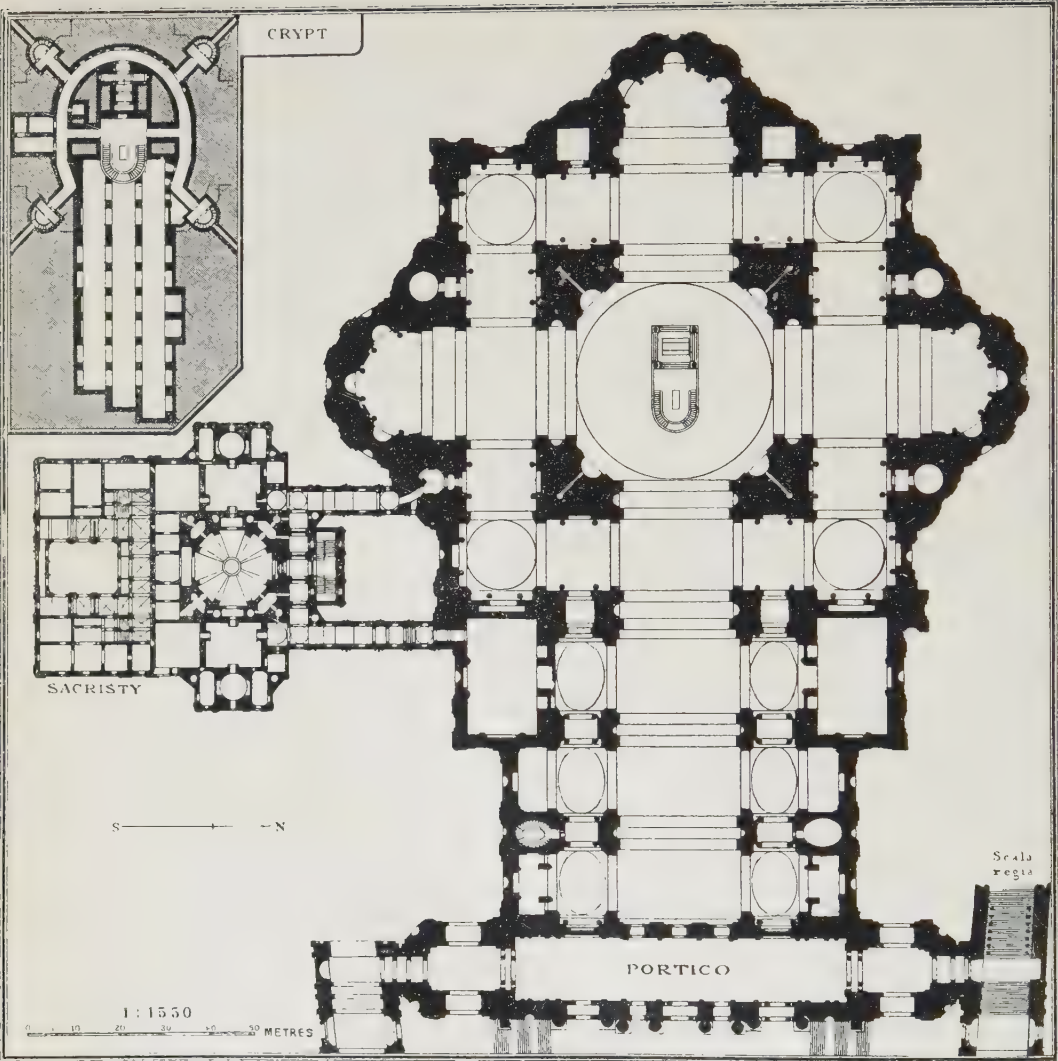
Minor departures from the model, probably also made in the architects' own lifetime, such as the substitution in the drum of curved or segmental pediments for angular over some of the windows, are of small import. But externally the omission of the curved buttresses which in the model unite the base of the actual cupola with the cornice of the drum is a distinct loss of a beautiful feature.<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to believe that this would have received the designer's consent.

When Michelangelo died, the cupola was complete to the top of the drum. It was not finished till the year 1590, in the Papacy

<sup>1</sup> In St. Paul's, Wren has adopted this discarded feature for his dome, with great advantage to its symmetry.







PRESENT GROUND PLAN, ST PETER'S, ROME

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of Clement VIII. It is at this point that the failure of Michelangelo to provide models for his portico shows itself in the light of a disaster. If he had done so there is little doubt that the building would have been carried out to its completion practically according to his design. He had planned a portico consisting of a row of four free columns in front of a second colonnade of ten similar free columns; the whole to be placed at the east end of the short shaft or nave of his Greek cross plan. But in 1606, more than forty years had passed since the day of his death. The reverence for his genius which had bound both Pope and architect to the great master's plans had waned somewhat in that time. Paul v. sat on the Papal throne and Carlo Maderna was his architect. Between them it was resolved to lengthen the nave once more till the plan took form as a Latin cross, and to add the façade as we now have it, to the great injury of the external design as seen from the east or Piazza side. And so the great opportunity passed, and the name of Michelangelo became inseparably linked with a building which, if he could have seen it in its ultimate shape would have drawn from him utterances more strong than any that had been heard from him in his lifetime by pope or cardinal, deputy or clerk of the works.

With the exception of the cupola itself, which we are able to compare with its model, it is extremely difficult to say where, in the parts immediately surrounding the west or cupola end of the church, Michelangelo's work begins or ends. It is probable, however, that a great deal of the detail of the external arrangement of the building at that end is due to him. He is probably responsible for the great Corinthian pilasters which are placed between the windows and run up the building in a height of some 112 feet. Some writers have held that these ornaments, for their structural duties are very slight, were a continuation of the order imposed upon the building by Bramante. But Vasari expressly speaks of a Doric order, and it will be remembered that Sangallo in his strictures on Bramante's plan finds fault with the proportions of the capitals of external Doric pilasters. And this seems to suggest that some of these were already in their place when Sangallo was made architect. We hear of no demolitions under Sangallo, nor till the days of Michelangelo himself—and it seems probable, therefore, that he demolished the Doric pilasters—a step which one cannot but regret, and substituted Corinthian. The use of these Corinthian pilaster ornaments both externally and internally has been the subject of strongly adverse criticism. There is no doubt that these gigantic



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pilasters with their assertive capitals, placed as pairs for ornament upon the flat surfaces of the nave piers, are responsible for much of the feeling of vulgarity and of falseness which unfortunately give the first impression to the stranger who enters the nave. It is only just, however, to remember that for their obtrusion in this nave, as for the nave itself, the master must not be held responsible. The method of decoration by these means is open to criticism even on the faces of the piers about the cupola, but there at least they do not outrage the sense of proportion. The eye soars to the heights within the great dome above, so that the details of the pilasters below, as indeed all other details, take their proper proportions, or sink into their due oblivion. The apology may seem at first sight a poor one. It is, of course, a mere admission that there is very much which needs to be lost sight of. But few have ever been found to deny that. Still fewer have been found who have failed to feel, as they stand beneath it, the mysterious effect, the sense of vastness and of grandeur, which belongs to this great human achievement.

It is indeed hopeless for one who has been brought up in the worship of the noble Gothic cathedrals of Northern Europe, to admire, or even forgive, Michelangelo's scheme of St. Peter's as a whole, unless he can for the time being entirely forget Gothic, and approach the great building from the wholly different standpoint of Italian revived classicism. He will even then, when he has become for the time being a disciple of the late Renaissance, have much to forgive in the too evident divorce of ornament and structure, in the too ready admission of clay-cold forms which have no claim to respect on any grounds save that they were used by the Romans, and by them very often with a good reason which is wholly absent in the Renaissance building. All this may and must be granted. But applying to Michelangelo's design for St. Peter's, so far as it is possible to us now to realise it, the only standard by which it is just to the designer, to the building, to the spectator himself to judge it, we shall find that those qualities which constitute the special virtue of the classical Renaissance style—spaciousness and largeness, with a certain majestic simplicity of construction, harmony of parts, and a strong sense of the unity of thought which should pervade the whole, these qualities would have been reached, if his design had survived to the end, in a degree which has been reached by no other building of its style. True, that with it we may find also all those faults which were not, as is sometimes said, inseparable from the style—it is possible to imagine a classical building quite free from



ELEVATION OF CUPOLA FROM MODEL IN ST. PETER'S, ROME



SECTION OF CUPOLA FROM MODEL IN ST. PETER'S, ROME



## ST. PETER'S

them—but which had, through the pedantic literary classicism of the day, come to be regarded as a part of it. Under the great dome we cease to be purists, cease almost to be critics.

As has been said, the beauty of the external dome cannot be appreciated in any quite near view, except perhaps from some of the heights in rear of the church. From any other near view, especially from the front, which should be the most impressive, the drum of the dome is so cut off and hidden by the mass of the building that the upper visible portion of the dome becomes positively unshapely. One of the most satisfactory points of view will be found to be from the Aventine, near the gardens of the Priorato of the knights of Malta. Here the beautiful proportions of the cupola make themselves felt without the obtrusion of the ugly lines of the façade, which in the view from the Pincian, even at such a distance and from such a height, still greatly injure the effect. But to estimate the mere vastness of the dome, no view from within the city is sufficient. It must be seen from some point four or five miles off in the Campagna when it becomes no longer one of the many domes of Rome, but the only dome in Rome, almost Rome itself.<sup>1</sup> It is not thus, of course, that strict criticism can be applied to the architecture of a building—but it is probably thus that the conception of the dome comes nearest to the thought which governed the design of the master—namely, to present St. Peter's as a symbol of the great Christian power dominating Rome, and through Rome, the world.

<sup>1</sup> Up to the year 1870, it was the custom on the night of Easter Sunday to illuminate, at enormous cost, the dome of St. Peter's by lanterns which followed the main lines of cupola, lantern, and cross. The writer saw this in the year in question from the Sabine Hills near Tivoli. The effect of the mighty dome seen through the darkness as if suspended in Heaven can never be forgotten.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE LAST WORKS DURING THE PERIOD OF ST. PETER'S—DRAWINGS AND WAX MODELS OF VARIOUS PERIODS—OTHER WORKS

IT would have seemed fitting to have ended our review of Michelangelo's career with the crowning achievement of the dome of St. Peter's. Thus it would have been preferred both by writer and reader. But to omit all reference to the works which during those last seventeen years of his life either came from his hand, or were the children of his brain, would be to mutilate the record of an unparalleled old age. The labours which fell to his lot as architect of St. Peter's, between the ages of seventy-two and eighty-nine, constitute in themselves a mental and physical feat—the latter feature comes strongly to our thought as we look up into the great drum and think of its ladders, its scaffoldings, its platforms—for which we can find no parallel on this side of the days of the Patriarchs. In the presence of that task the least addition of work or design becomes the more amazing and helps to complete for us a picture which inspires us with a feeling of reverence. He says, indeed, of himself in a letter to Lionardo, that though he is now so very old and in constant pain from his disease, he often, save for that, feels like a boy of thirty. When sleepless nights overtook him he was apt to rise, and with the candle stuck in his cap in true sculptor's fashion, attack vigorously a block of marble—one of those half finished 'Pietàs' perhaps, such as that which looks down upon us from the high altar in Florence, and was once meant by him to keep watch over his own tomb. One who saw him thus in his far old age gives a striking account of the vigour with which the old man smote the marble from the block. He was sculptor at heart to the very end, and used the craft now only for pleasure and for exercise. Other recreation he had none, except, we are told, an evening ride outside the walls of Rome.

But it stands to reason that with the absorbing care of St. Peter's upon him; with the oversight also, no doubt, of the Capitol buildings,

## STA. MARIA DEGLI ANGELI

which, though Tommaso Cavalieri was in charge of them, were yet a responsibility on the master's mind, he had little time or surplus of energy to devote to other designs. That he furnished the general idea of the Porta Pia in its original form, now much overlaid with additions, is doubtless true, but we cannot assign the detail to the master. His disinclination to set down in pencil an accurate drawing measured to scale seems not unnaturally to have grown upon him. The mental effort of striking out a new idea and putting it into a definite shape must have ceased to be, as it once was, a joy to him. Yet the old spirit led him to listen to proposals for new projects. In 1559, Caterina dei Medici (the sister of the murdered Duke Alessandro), who had just lost her husband, Henry II. of France, by his accident in the tilting-yard, wrote to bespeak from the hand of the master an equestrian statue in bronze. It is amusing to find with what nervous precision she exacts the condition that it shall be a strict likeness, and in modern armour—she was thinking of her father, 'Il Pensieroso' of the Medici Tombs. Michelangelo accepted the commission, stipulating that Daniele da Volterra should model the horse. The horse was duly cast, indeed, but the rider was not set thereon. Michelangelo, who never made an exact portrait in his life, perhaps did not take kindly to the King of France 'without his curls and in a handsome modern suit.' It needed Donatello or Verrocchio back again, but was no task for the sculptor of the 'Tombs.'

To the capable but florid sculptor, Leone Leoni, Michelangelo is said to have given a design, by the wish of Pius IV., for the monument of Jacopo dei Medici, Marquis of Marignano, the Pope's brother. The tomb is now to be seen in the right transept of Milan Cathedral, and shows evident signs of Michelangelo's influence. No doubt the master gave the lines for the general disposition of the parts, but the carrying out speaks plainly of Leone himself. The allegorical bronze figures of the virtues, finely modelled and cast, are the work of Leone, and show that he was trying to model in the spirit of Michelangelo. But there is no nearer connection than such as I have indicated with the direct hand of that master.

But by far the most important work of his old age, after St. Peter's itself, is the church of Sta. Maria degli Angeli (Plate LXXXVI.), which he designed within the great hall or Calidarium of the baths of Diocletian, whose ruins covered a vast space of ground near that portion of the Servian wall where the chief Roman railway station now stands. The work was not undertaken until the very



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last year or two years of the master's life, and once more his reluctance to tie himself to the tedious preparation of measured plans and models which could have been closely adhered to after his death has robbed us of what would assuredly have been a masterpiece of his art, far less vast, but more pleasing, than St. Peter's itself. As it is, the architects who followed him later reversed his plan, eventually turning into transept that which should have been nave, to the permanent injury of the design. They further robbed the building of its proportions by stunting the vault of the roof into a curve of flatter section. At still later periods all has been done that is in the power of man to deface a noble design by ornament of the most tawdry and vulgar kind. Yet in spite of it all, Sta. Maria degli Angeli remains one of the most impressive of the churches of Rome. It possesses to a degree known to few other churches that sense of spaciousness which is the special virtue and heritage of the Renaissance church and which makes us forgive so much. The form of the ground plan was originally a Latin cross, but with a shaft or nave short in proportion to the breadth. It is generally stated that the entrance in the original design was at the end which has now become the right transept, while the high altar was at the end of the shaft or long arm of the cross, which has now become the left transept. Doubtless this was so when it left the hands of those who completed it. But I am strongly disposed to believe that Michelangelo designed his church with the entrance at the end of his long shaft or nave (now left transept), intending the short upper arm (now right transept) for the position of his chief tribune or choir. I have no doubt whatever that he had proposed to himself also a cupola, probably of the form of St. Peter's, over the great space whence his three tribunes issued. The four great ancient piers (now hidden by marble facing) have been greatly strengthened, and are equal to the task of supporting far more than they are now asked to carry. They would have been fit to support a dome of the size needed. This would give us a church in which, to one entering it from a portico at the end of the original nave, the full effect of the dome would—as at St. Peter's, if Michelangelo's plan had been adhered to—have made itself felt. If, as I believe, this was the master's design for Sta. Maria degli Angeli, it is difficult to imagine a church which would have been more worthy of the man. It would have been on a smaller scale an epitome of the best points in the architecture of St. Peter's with its too obvious drawbacks minimised, and with even a greater sense of spaciousness. But the fate which fell upon St. Peter's fell also on Sta. Maria. The



HOUSE OF COMMONS, LONDON



GREAT CLOISTER OF S. MARIA DEGLI ANGELI, ROME



## OTHER LATE WORKS

plan was carried to its end by others. Either they mistrusted their own power to add a cupola to the ancient piers, or the money for the project was not forthcoming, or, more probably still, Michelangelo had left neither plans nor models. The upper portion has the appearance of having been carried through in haste. How far the building was completed when the master died is uncertain, but all that is above the cornice as we see it now has surely gone far from his design. And in the year 1749 Vanvitelli wholly remodelled the interior arrangements. He turned the nave into a transept, and, prolonging the original left transept into a choir, added an entrance porch to the tribune opposite, which had been the right transept. Few more disastrous calamities have ever befallen a building of such nobility.

No record remains to us of the plans—there were five in all—which Michelangelo drew in 1560, four years before his death, for the rebuilding of the church of San Giovanni of the Florentines, which stands at the bend of the Tiber, not far below the Ponte St. Angelo. It is clear that in his five attempts the master had at length got a design after his own heart—for he told the committee of his brother Florentines that if they carried it out they would have such a building as had never been seen in days ancient or modern. But the church of the Florentines was not destined to be completed on his plan, and that which we now see is mainly from the design of Giacomo della Porta. Of numerous other works whether in architecture, sculpture, or painting, freely attributed both in Italy and elsewhere to the hand of the master, often without any evidence either of documents or of style, we need make no lengthened mention now. The master seems at all times in his career to have been good-naturedly ready to furnish designs—most often we may suppose of a slight and hasty description—to other less capable men. Many of the works thus carried out have in their day, a less critical day perhaps than this, done duty in galleries as original works by the master, while others, without carrying their claim so far, are yet extant as works carried out on his design. It is difficult to establish in these latter cases the degree in which the true design of Michelangelo underlies the final work. We may instance in this latter category the great ‘Raising of Lazarus’ by Sebastiano del Piombo in our National Gallery, the ‘Scourging of Christ’ in S. Pietro in Montorio, and other works by the same painter; and Daniele da Volterra’s ‘Descent from the Cross’ in Sta. Trinità dei Monti. The tendency, too, to attach all that can possibly be attached to such a name has never been resisted. But it cannot be

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said that the master's reputation has greatly suffered by such attributions. He was hard to follow, and still worse to imitate.

Neither is it possible to analyse with profit the large number of small models in wax which are found under the master's name in the museums of Europe, of which a certain number are doubtless genuine memoranda for work which he was to accomplish, or studies for his own use; while a very large number are as obviously productions from the completed works of Michelangelo by other hands at various periods: it does not take long for a wax model to assume an air of great antiquity. These last works are suspicious in the degree in which they represent with accuracy the final condition of the completed work for which they purport to have served as models. The same caution is needed with regard to the acceptance of the small bronzes which of late years have been attached with more or less confidence to his name. At no time in his life, in spite of his training under Bertoldo, did Michelangelo show great inclination towards work in bronze. Neither was work on a small scale, except as an indication to himself of something that was to follow, at all to his liking. His recreation lay, especially in later days, with the mallet and chisel on a large block of marble, rather than in the production of the smaller works in which other sculptors and modellers have often found their pastime.

At the same time, while a highly finished wax model claiming to be by Michelangelo will naturally be viewed with suspicion, the finish alone would not be sufficient ground for its rejection, any more than the contrary condition justifies—and sometimes seems to be made to justify—the admission of so many unfinished fragments of wax modelling into public collections under his name. We are reminded that Antonio Mini, Michelangelo's assistant, carried in 1531, together with the 'Leda,' with the master's consent, a case of models which he purposed to sell in France. And one may assert with some assurance that in the condition of taste in France at that date the mere wax memoranda and first thoughts in wax or clay of Michelangelo, such as we now rightly treasure, would not have been likely to find buyers amongst the dilettanti of the day in that country. It is to be supposed that that case of models which Mini took with him contained small works, which, however broadly handled, would commend themselves to the taste of the buyers in France as completed works.

Of drawings, sketch memoranda, plans and elevations, the number which survive under his name in the galleries and cabinets of Europe

## DRAWINGS

is very large indeed, many times more numerous than those of any master of his day. He is said to have been very generous in his gifts of these drawings to those who desired them, and the fact that his fame was widespread early in his life no doubt accounts for the preservation of so large a number.

The inventory made at the time of his death names only twelve drawings as found in his studio, a large number having been recently destroyed by him. But in spite of this destruction, ever to be deplored, we are rich in these masterly drawings—unconsidered trifles to him, but which, coming as they do straight from the master's brain and hand, unspoiled by any chilling intermediate processes, are sometimes as eloquent as his most complete achievements. They vary from the slightest jottings, first thoughts, studies of arms or legs, little sketches of attitude or gesture, almost always in the nude, to the most elaborate and masterly studies from the life. But even these latter are often done on chance sheets of paper which have served the purposes of accounts or memoranda. The Berlin Cabinet has a drawing, No. 5132, of a man with his back turned to show the anatomical marking of the edge of the scapula. On the back one finds in Michelangelo's fine picturesque hand a page of accounts with the date of March 8, 1519, made out at Carrara or Serravezza with records of payments for the quarrying of marbles for the façade of San Lorenzo. Among the names of the recipients one reads a certain Raffaele Cardoccia, reminding us that the ancestors of the poet Giosué Carducci belonged to those parts. The materials used in these drawings are red and black chalk, pencil, reed pen and ink, and (rarely where the drawing is genuine) wash. The drawing is, in spite of its large and rapid seizure of the leading lines of the movement, and the necessary slightness with which passing action has to be recorded, almost invariably careful, sometimes extraordinarily careful, but without any sacrifice of largeness or any approach to the recording of useless minutiae. The exception to this statement will be found in the instances in which he has, apparently at lightning speed, jotted down the plan of a design as it occurred to him. Here he has been content often with mere symbols for figures—as in one of his drawings for the 'Medici Tombs,' where the statues are so many Dutch dolls, merely representing the position which they will have to occupy, as a more speedy method of indication than writing. These scratches represent the bottom of the scale, which ranges through every degree of desirability and expressiveness up to drawings which for these



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qualities hardly fall short of the greatest of his works. It was not to be expected that the list of drawings which exist under his name should not have been swelled by the inclusion of a very large number which are not from his hand. Many drawings approximating to his style have passed by sale or purchase under his name into the great public collections. Others in the same collections are studies by his pupils, followers, or later admirers from his completed works, or are copies of his sketches. The task of separating the true from the false has only been seriously undertaken of late years, and must take long before it is accomplished: but much has already been done by eminent critics in England, Germany, and Italy to discriminate the true handiwork of the master. The Oxford Collection (over fifty under his name), the British Museum, Windsor Castle, the Vienna Albertina, the Berlin and Munich Cabinets, the Teyler Museum in Haarlem, the Louvre, the Casa Buonarroti, the Uffizi, all possess fine genuine examples of his hand, but are of necessity undergoing the same process of scrutiny and sifting from which they must emerge poorer in numbers but richer in trustworthiness.<sup>1</sup>

The drawings to which the greatest interest will naturally attach, though they are in many cases not so fine as others which cannot be connected with any of his finished works, are those which seem to have served as studies or first thoughts for his best known frescoes or sculpture. They rarely (except in the cases where they are but studies by another hand from his finished work) represent the exact pose or detail of the work as it took final shape, but express the motive, or indicate the approximate lines of the figure. A few only can be mentioned. The British Museum possesses an interesting though slight forethought for the 'Madonna' of Bruges, on which the words *abbozzo di Bruges* occur, and a study of a man stooping over a river for a portion of the 'Pisa Cartoon' (B.B. 1525). Several suggestions for the Madonna of the Sacristy exist—though the Louvre drawing which gives a profile view in its exact final condition is, from various indications, to be counted as a drawing by another hand from the statue itself.<sup>2</sup> The drawings which can be connected with the Sistine Vault and 'Last Judgment' are numerous. (Plates CXVIII.-CXXIII.) Dr. Ernst Steinmann in his great work on the Sistine Chapel, already several times quoted, has brought

<sup>1</sup> Signor P. Neroni Ferri, the Director of the Uffizi; Dr. Jacobsen; Mr. Sidney Colvin; Mr. Berenson; Signor A. Venturi have already done much to sift the true from the false.

<sup>2</sup> I have no doubt that this opinion will not meet with universal assent.

## THE PIETÀ OF STA. MARIA DEL FIORE

together nearly eighty drawings which may be referred, though not all as undoubted originals of the master, to this connection. Trial sketches for the Julian and Medici tombs, in various stages of the master's thought, and of the greatest interest, are fairly numerous, and are supplemented by a few which are of equal value as mere evidence, by the hands of scholars after his sketches. Of architectural drawings or of sketch designs for his works—such as for the façade of San Lorenzo, two of which exist in the Casa Buonarroti (Plates LIII., LIV.)—we have also a fair number. It is very noticeable that amongst all these drawings, numbering several hundreds, the percentage of examples which include any interest save those of the human form or of architecture is extremely small. Here, if anywhere, amongst these casual jottings, where a man plays with his pencil and lets it sometimes guide him where it will, we should have expected to find bird and beast, tree or flower, landscape or city. Their absence is remarkable, and emphasises that characteristic in the bent of Michelangelo's mind which has so often been dwelt on in these pages.

The fact which we have several times recorded, that Michelangelo in his far old age returned from time to time to his first love, sculpture, and found his recreation in it, receives touching confirmation in the existence of several groups which bear both the stamp of his still-burning genius and the pathetic evidence of his waning strength. The mind turns naturally to the well-known group of the 'Entombment' (Plate xc.) now placed at the back of the high altar in the Duomo of Florence. According to Vasari this group had been intended by the sculptor for his own tomb, and the same writer says that in the face of Nicodemus may be recognised the features of the old man himself. But as the work proceeded, Michelangelo had become dissatisfied with it, or with himself. It is said, too, that the block proved to be an intractable piece of marble, and one day the sculptor broke it and set it aside. His studio man Antonio begged and received it, selling it presently to one Bandini who set it up in his garden. Ultimately it was placed in its present honourable position by Duke Cosimo the Third, in 1722. There is no work which came from the sculptor at any period of his life which is more full of feeling, more worthy of the great thinker and great designer than this most touching and most beautiful group. Whether Vasari be right or wrong in seeing in the Nicodemus the features of the sculptor, it is impossible not to feel as one looks at it that the old man had read into his group the pathos of

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his own life. It breathes a spirit of deep and earnest religion, and of sympathy with weak and suffering humanity such as we have not found in the work of his vigorous middle life, which seems to join hands across the three score years and more that lay between, with the first great 'Pietà' of his youth, the Madonna of St. Peter's. The fiercer spirit which produced the Christ amongst the terror-stricken souls of the 'Last Judgment' has wholly passed away again. It sometimes seems to us like the fever of a day which held him just at that phase of his life. The hand in this later 'Pietà' may have lacked the power which guided the chisel in his earlier masterpieces; the great sculptor, the faultless technician may seem to be less present in it, but that which gives to Art its true value as a power to hold man's soul and to move his better being—the thought, the feeling, the sympathy are here in this group by an old man who was past eighty summers, as in no other work of all that brave and strenuous lifetime. Vasari showed himself at his best when he tried earnestly to obtain it to place it over the old sculptor's tomb. One almost, when one hears it, forgives him his own poor work in Santa Croce under which the bones of Michelangelo now rest.

It is said that when the sculptor had broken the 'Pietà' of the Duomo he at once commenced another upon a smaller block. Some writers have found this 'Pietà' in the *abozzo* which stands in the courtyard of the Rondanini Palace in the Roman Corso (see Chapter VII.). I seek it rather in a group in the chapel of Santa Rosalia attached to the Barberini Palace at Palestrina<sup>1</sup> (Plate LXXXVIII.). This group, long ago well known to wandering artists who spent their summer in and about the villages that border the Sabine Hills, has for some reason received strangely little notice at the hands of writers upon art. It is just forty years since, during a chance ride in the Sabine Mountains, I became acquainted with this work, and I have often wondered when the silence which has surrounded it was destined to be broken. Indeed, until within the last year or two, when M. Grenier, a member of the French Academy of the Villa Medici, published a note upon it in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, it has been impossible to obtain a photograph of it.

It is difficult to see it in its present dark position, made worse by

<sup>1</sup> It is, however, sometimes stated that the Palestrina group, made of local stone, is part of the rock itself in which the chapel is built. The statement can hardly be said to have been proved. But if it is true it obviously disposes of my theory, implying that Michelangelo must have visited Palestrina and carved the group *in situ*.





PIETÀ  
(UNFINISHED)

*Palatrina*

X



PIETÀ

Palazzo Rondanini, Rome

## THE PALESTRINA PIETÀ

the atrocious plaster curtain which helps to conceal it. But the *abozzo* must in my opinion take rank as an undoubted and valuable work of the master, belonging apparently to the last period of his life. It has reached only a very incomplete stage, the enormous right arm of the Saviour not yet being reduced, and consequently appearing colossal. The legs are bent under as in so many cases in the work of the master, but here to such an extent as to suggest that the sculptor had taken a block, and, without previous measurement or guiding line, hewn his thought fiercely from the marble and failed to provide sufficient room. The Madonna who supports the dead figure from above is left with a mere rudely blocked out head of great size. The Magdalene on the other side is more advanced. The torso and upper part of the legs of the chief figure are probably carried as far as the sculptor intended. If the figure of the Madonna had been brought but a little further towards its final meaning, this group would hardly fall short of the Florentine 'Pietà' itself in pathetic beauty. But even as it is, it deserves a high place among the unfinished works of Michelangelo. As has been said, it is doubtless a very late sketch, but of magnificent knowledge, and, as far as it has gone, of grand execution. As one stands before it, or indeed before any other work in which the thought and the feeling hold that place of honour which they must hold in a really great work of art, force must be used with oneself before the attention can be fixed upon the technical detail which underlies the result. For this great sculptor is aiming always to express thought through form, rather than mere fact through form. But inasmuch as no work of art can express itself except through the details of technique any more than a poet can reach our imagination except through his use of words and phrases, the bones and anatomy of his art, it will be well to ask ourselves here by what virtue in the technique of the craft itself these half-shaped blocks of Michelangelo's shaping succeed in impressing us and in suggesting, without elaborate terms, their deep intention. The work of a bungler, an incompetent, a pretender, has no such power. Even one whose thought is great, but who is without the technical power to match it, if we see his work in its preliminary masses, leaves his thought unexpressed in the marble. With Michelangelo, even in his rudest beginnings, the forms seem to be there in the marble, shadowed forth merely, yet ready to step beyond the veil. We know what they will be. We should gain little more of their essential meaning though we should learn much of their ultimate shape, if we could see them several stages further on.



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I think that if a single technical reason can suffice to answer such a question it will be found in the fact that Michelangelo as a sculptor, as well as a painter, in his rendering of human form is concerned first and foremost with the bony structure which lies beneath, and which as a means of expression is the alpha and omega of his art. In his rendering of the nude form—as well as in the draped, he saw always to the bone. The muscle which clothes it is magnificently drawn or carved, but always, as in nature, depending on the bony structure. His followers or his imitators, or those who thought they knew his secret, the Bandinellis and the Ammanatis, most often lumped the muscle on and left the bones below to take care of themselves. Even Raphael, when, deserting his Perugino traditions, he set himself to draw as Michelangelo, loads muscle on to nude forms—this may be well seen in his nude studies for the ‘Incendio del Borgo’—which express rather bulk than strength. The nearest approach in the work of Michelangelo himself to a contradiction of this principle may at first sight seem to come to us from some of the figures in the ‘Last Judgment.’ But even there, where the master has gone to his furthest point in the representation of massive form—I have in my chapter on the fresco made some suggestions on the cause—he has given us no figure in which, if we examine it, we shall not find that the muscular envelope, however developed, is in complete and discernible relation to the bones beneath. In this Palestrina group, as in all his works begun or completed, through the half-hewn indefinite masses may be detected the same searching insistence on this principle. Another noticeable point in this work is the hand of the Madonna, the only part of that figure which is at all advanced. It is an old, strong, thin hand firmly grasping the dead son—thoroughly characteristic of the sculptor, who is seen again in the bands which run round the upper and lower portions of the torso. These bands of which he was so fond—we remember them perhaps best from the ‘Slaves’—apart from other uses serve as cross lines to correct the downward lines of a body.

But, as I have said, it requires some effort to pass from the contemplation of such a group to the analysis of the alphabet by which it is expressed. It is the thought and the pathos of the group which hold us—the great fact so told to us that it makes us think of the thing as it really happened, the crushing terrible grief, the tender human affection. This, as he gives it to us here and in the ‘Pietà’ of the Duomo, is an incident of the greatest of human sorrows that



THE ENTOMBMENT

S. Maria della Vittoria

[illegible]



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ever befell, an arrested moment out of the great days of suffering to Mother or to Son. The suffering, the sorrow, the heart-brokenness, great human as well as great spiritual facts, cannot be expressed to us except through the rendering, and the right rendering, of the technical facts of the human body, which is the external agent of all the greater facts. Here at any rate sculpture goes beyond the power of words.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE END—THE MAN

*'Se la vita ci piace, essendo anco la morte di mano d'un medesimo maestro, quella non ci dovrebbe dispiacere.'*—Saying of Michelangelo.

THE end of the great life came at last in merciful form. One Monday in the February of 1564, when he had come to within a few weeks of ninety, the old man was preparing to take his evening ride, when he felt ill, and preferred to sit by his fire. Two days of sitting up and three of bed, with friends and helpers around him, and on the Friday evening of February 23rd, the light went out. It is difficult to think of any life, amongst artists or other men, of such a length, which had ever been lived out so fully and so strenuously to its end. Never went 'hand and soul' so long together in a life's work. From the day when, as an eager child of thirteen, he had gone down from Settignano to Ghirlandaio's workshop, up to the day when his eyes grew faint in the studio near Trajan's Forum, every day that had passed had been a day in the life of an artist.

It was to Florence that his thoughts turned in his last few days of illness—he desired, as he always had desired, to be there at rest. Of the coming of the poor humanity to Florence, of the honour that men paid him at the grave,—the most costly in that sort perhaps that ever was so paid to a man of art,—of the gorgeous catafalque in San Lorenzo, expressed in Florentine fancy,—of the ornate oration pronounced by Benedetto Varchi from one of Donatello's pulpits, Vasari speaks with fullest and minutest circumstance. The reader may be referred to his pages. It was no fault of Vasari's, whose heart was always better than his hand, that the grave of the great Tuscan is not worthily crowned with the group of the 'Pietà' which he had, it is thought, prepared for his own tomb. It should have sufficed. No man stood less in need of any pompous monument.

Michelangelo possessed, perhaps as much as any man who ever lived, those strongly developed traits of natural temperament, which,

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showing themselves throughout the actions of a man's life, come to be called his personality. History presents us with few examples in which such personality seems more striking and more clearly defined, and history almost as a consequence shows us few men in whom so many apparently opposite qualities can be traced,—almost as a consequence, because strong personality implies the presence of those contrasting qualities. In a perfect character,—which may be a very different thing from a strong personality,—the contrast is not perceived; the opposing qualities being held in such perfect balance and control, that they do not protrude themselves, so to speak, above the even surface of the character and of the action of the life. But in a strong personality we find certain qualities asserting themselves strongly, so strongly as to give their colour, easily recognised colour, to the character of the man, and, however splendid they may be in their finest development, yet invariably showing themselves also in the shape of faults, sometimes great faults, often minor faults, often even amusing faults, which accompany and are also the complement of the characteristic virtue of the man. We enjoy these very faults for the reason that they do help to make up the personality, the portrait, of the man whom we desire to see and know. We take them as part of the man. It would not be the man himself without them.

And as the man so too his art—strongly, one might almost say incomparably, personal, standing alone in a certain sense amongst all the art which has ever been produced, in spite of the throng of followers, full of strong qualities whose greatness makes the art of the man stand out above the crowd, as the Dome of his own St. Peter's above the buildings of Rome; and full too of drawbacks seen not merely by the presence of certain faults which grew out of his virtues, but also in the absence of certain great sympathies which count for much in other men's art:—an absence which, as we have seen, was of deliberate choice on his part, and goes far to make the personality of his art, but an absence which is doubtless at the bottom of the dislike which his art has always created in so many minds.

As a man his qualities were, to a great extent, with him from the first and were with him to the last. The masterful, magnificent will which saw in every enterprise its purpose clearly from the first, and which brought all the highly-trained forces of mind and body into immediate action for its end; the mental energy which compelled a bodily frame of less than average strength—it will not be forgotten that his childhood was very sickly, and the last twenty years of his life



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weighed down by a painful disease—to accomplish the work of two or three ordinary men; the broad power of seeing at once the greater facts of life,—the essentials of all that he was to put his hand to,—to the omission of the meaner facts; the true humility of his nature (strangely in contrast at first sight, yet in no real contrast at all, to that impetuous, independent temper of his), which made him at every moment of his life a learner, truly the most docile of men. One thinks indeed, of the old man in his last years as they found him one snowy winter's day near to the Colosseum. 'Why here, and whither going on such a day?' 'To school, to school to see if I can learn anything,' and one thinks again of the design of the reverse of Leone Leoni's medal, which the master himself suggested, with the old blind man led by a dog. It was the secret of a life, a secret which lay far down out of the sight of other men, who saw only the apparent self-assertion, the youthful pugnacity, which survived, by reason of his mental and physical vigour far into the years when most men lay it by perforce, while they did not see the true humility of nature which underlay it all. These qualities began to mark his dealings with the world and his work in it, at a time when he was hardly out of his boyhood. And so, too, did the corresponding faults; the same fierce occasional fits of temper as those which led him to express hasty and ungenerous opinions: the same nervous irritability which caused him to throw the letter of his nephew, Lionardo, whom he really loved, into the fire, because he said the hand-writing amazed him; the constant despondency which overtook him after his periods of most eager, most lofty aspiration; the needless suspicion of the good faith of men about him, often expressed in letters, which at the same time bore witness to the most generous thoughts, and the most generous deeds to others. The high-handed treatment of all opinion contrary to his own; the impatience with all opposition even from men whose attainments qualified them to oppose; and, on the other hand, his tender considerate handling of men of very poor capacities who sought his aid. These contraries receive illustration, not from one or two, but from countless incidents in the long, much tried, life of the man. He can be needlessly fierce and rude of speech when he thinks he is being made sport of by Lionardo da Vinci, ungenerous of judgment when he fancies he is being trapped by Bramante or Raphael; impatiently scornful when he is face to face with the 'sect of Sangallo'; but tender as a woman when poor Urbino is to be nursed or when some poor girl needs a marriage dower; or the widow of one who has served him finds the wolf at her door. He has

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been accused of personal timidity on account of his leaving Florence in his early days under the Medici, and again when he left his post as engineer in the siege of Florence by Clement and Charles v. The reader will have, perhaps, realised that neither case demands such an explanation. The man was no physical coward who faced the terrors of the plague with its often-tried power to demoralise and destroy the nearest of natural affections, whether in Athens, in Florence, or in London, that he might nurse poor Buonarroto, stricken with the fell disease, till the brother died in his arms. For the other sort of courage his life needs no certificate from any source. Julius and Leo, Clement and Paul, masterful men one and all, were no match for him in determination. He does not fear to let the Duke Alessandro, in whom vice and depravity had long killed out all scruple about the life of a man, know that he will work for none like him. Life in Rome was not too safe in the sixteenth century even without the hatred of Italian workmen and jobbing underlings balked of their sources of gain. He incurred it fearlessly without looking to his right hand or to his left.

There is, too, a striking contrast between the outspoken freedom and even rashness of his utterances in all matters where he had a right to an utterance and the self-control which kept his lips sealed in all matters which did not pertain to his immediate duties and to his art. There is no artist of his period and country whose surviving letters are so numerous—none whose life covers events of such absorbing interest to his country. He had lived in Florence in the days of Savonarola, and yet there is only one hint in his letters that he had ever known, admired, followed the great Frate. He is in Rome in the days of the Borgia, and yet his letters might have been written from a workshop in a Quaker settlement. He is in Florence in the troubled days of Alessandro; first in command as engineer of the defences; an outlaw with a price upon his head; and the letters of the time are placid records of commissions, or complaints about his contracts. He carries his unbroken silence about matters which to him, as a patriot and a thinker and a student of humanity, must have been very near his heart, to a length which, brought doubtless also into his other relations of life, gave to it that aloofness which isolated him from the deeper friendships that can exist only where there is complete exchange of thought. Once only did he find one—in Vittoria Colonna—with whom this exchange seems to have been possible. Amongst those who knew him and who were actually his friends there were many who were devoted to him, whose kindness he valued to the full. To none of

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these did he fully open his heart on any of the subjects which lay nearest to it. He reveals his true self, his true thoughts to them only as to the rest of the world. They may seek him, as we others must seek him, in his works.

Of his single-minded devotion to his art,—a devotion which in the thoughtful days of later life became to him a cause of some self-reproach,—the whole career is an evidence. The Art and not what the Art brought him was from first to last the motive. Such wealth as he acquired was mainly due to the fact that in a long life of successful work he had spent almost nothing on himself. There was found in his studio when he was dead, money amounting to over three thousand pounds sterling of our currency, weight for weight, and he had also bought properties for his relations and for his servants. But such a sum accumulated in seventy years and more of a great artist's life is no large fortune. His enemies charged him with avarice, instancing the case of the Madonna of the Uffizi, for which he compelled Angelo Doni to pay more than twice the price of the contract. But that haughty treatment to the man who had tried to cheapen his art had no taint of avarice in it, any more than his summary dealings with Ferrara's agent. It was due to his proud and even chivalrous disdain for those who tried to treat his art as a matter of vulgar barter. The terms which he accepted for his statues in the Piccolomini contract, and again for the twelve statues for the Signoria of Florence were so ludicrously small as to make the execution of the contract ultimately impossible; while his refusal to accept any stipend for his work on St. Peter's, which extended over seventeen years, is more than an answer to the charge of avarice. He had lived from the beginning the simplest of lives, in which comfort, as other men counted comfort, had no place. His fare was that of his workmen.

*Al zucchero, alla mola, alle candele,  
Aggiuntovi un fiascon di malvagia  
Resta sì vinta ogni fortuna mia  
Ch' i' rendo le bilancie a san Michele.*—SONNET LXX.

In such words does the sculptor of the 'David,' the 'Moses,' the 'Medici Tombs'; the painter of the Sistine; the architect of the great Dome; the poet of the Sonnets and the Madrigals, express the wants of his old age. The ducats in the broken jars, and in the scraps of paper and green canvas bags, that lay about in his studio, were not the gatherings of a miser, but the unheeded surplus of a man who in that bare home of the Macello dei Corvi had all that he needed in life.



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and had discovered that happiness consisteth not in the abundance of things that a man possesseth.

But if we acquit Michelangelo on the charge of avarice in the ordinary sense of that term, and assign it, as we evidently may, to the malicious gossip which created yet other charges on less plausible ground, we cannot acquit him of having laid himself open to the charge by laxity in his handling of his pledged contracts. He was, as we have seen, ever ready to take up new enterprises, though they inevitably involved the neglect of earlier obligations. A new design, with its instant vision of mysterious creations, fascinated, one may even say intoxicated, his brain. The moral obligation of fulfilling what he had already undertaken weighed as nothing against this overwhelming influence. We saw him undertaking the statues for the Piccolomini Altar-piece at Siena at a price which the Cardinal should have known was an impossible one. But it is difficult to justify or even understand the position of the sculptor who retained for over fifty years a sum of money in his hands for work which he had never executed and which he could hardly have still dreamed of executing. It was the supineness of the executors of Pius III. which alone prevented the Piccolomini statues from becoming to him as much of a nightmare as the Tomb of Julius. The commission for the Twelve Apostles from the operai of the Duomo of Florence was undertaken with the same disregard for possibilities. We may blame the operai for the undignified act by which they consented to make a contract which secured the services of a great artist at the price of a day labourer. As a public body they only—though they should have known better—followed the recognised Italian practice of getting the best bargain they could. But the sculptor accepted the bargain, and the shadow of a 'Saint Matthew' was the only result. In the case of the Tomb of Julius, the other parties to the contract proved to be of a different fibre. They had, it is impossible to dispute, just grievance, and it was more than once the word of a pope that alone rescued the sculptor from his distressing obligations.<sup>1</sup> No doubt Michelangelo taught himself to regard the brief of a pope as complete absolution from a disagreeable contract, but it must not be forgotten that when Leo in his turn put an end to the San Lorenzo contract, the bitterness of Michelangelo knew no bounds. It did not occur to him that if he accepted the view that a pope's mere word could free

<sup>1</sup> In justice to Michelangelo one must remind the reader that when at last he handed the remaining statues over to Montelupo, he paid down 1200 scudi.

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him from a disadvantageous contract, then it must follow—however little we may like the intrinsic morality—that a pope's word also could free a pope himself, whether his name was Julius, or Leo, or Clement, from a contract which had ceased to please him. The truth is that in this matter of contracts Michelangelo adopted a moral standpoint no higher than that which perhaps belonged to the commercial morality of his day. But the evident disturbance of mind which his letters show upon the question, indicate that mere pressure of work was not the sole reason why he was so ill at ease with himself. He seems to have suffered from an incapacity to bring himself back to any project from which he had once sucked the artistic sweetness. Here you have a cause lying deep down in the temperament and in the artistic nature of the man. But it is not possible, on this ground, to exclude the view of a moral responsibility which he allowed himself—probably to his own deserved sorrow of mind—continually to overlook. One must not, in one's admiration for the greatness of the artist, nor even for the high qualities which we find in him as a man, forgive that in him which, if all artists should take example by it, would presently make art the most irresponsible of human pursuits.

That his private life was pure in an age when laxity of morals brought little reproach has been admitted by his most important biographers. It is true that the Roman gossips did not fail to try to find material out of the life of one who stood so high in the sight of men. But that is only the same as saying that the Roman gossip—a master of his craft from the days of Horace downwards—was, as ever, a good judge of his business and knew what points to fasten on. But the record stands the test of examination. Some modern writers have indeed been at pains to frame elaborate theories to account for this virtue in the man.<sup>1</sup> We may perhaps be allowed to be content with the fact as it stands without further dissection. Uncontrolled too often of temper and speech, his life in other respects showed strong sense of control, and asks for no special pleas such as genius is apt to put forward for itself. And, be it remembered, we are dealing with a man for whom the ordinary conventions of society had no charm. A certain dignity and self-respect still seem to fence in the life, which in its self-imposed surroundings sank so far below the ordinary standards of comfort, and so far flung to the winds all the ornament by which the world was then, as now, deceived.

The charge of paganism which has been brought against the art

<sup>1</sup> The reader will find the whole matter discussed at length in Symonds's *Life of Michelangelo*.

## THE END—THE MAN

of Michelangelo has, by an almost inevitable process, been sometimes also carried over into the inner life and religious feeling of the man himself. Orthodox perhaps he was not, insomuch as the thoughts of his mind followed a path trodden by few of those who were of his faith. But religious he certainly was, with a very genuine and very deep religion which dared to see the action and the creations of God in regions where less earnest though more conventional minds dared not to follow him. Of his own profound and simple trust in God, his letters, in their brief, plain utterances, leave us no doubt. His admiration for Savonarola endured long after the glamour of the great preacher's personal presence had passed away. The great prophets and inspirers of his youth—the Bible, Dante, Savonarola, were still the prophets of his old age, and, as we have seen, the vision of the Mother and the Son was amongst the first as it was amongst the last subjects which he strove to realise with his chisel.

It is, by the way, in this connection somewhat remarkable that his work is often spoken of not merely as pagan in the spirit of its rendering, but pagan in the choice and character of its subjects. There is no more striking instance of the persistence with which a statement once made will be repeated and accepted, generation by generation, when a simple process of arithmetic once applied would have exploded the fallacy. It is possible to find only some twelve to twenty works, existing, recorded, projected, or attributed, in which the subject is classical. Of these, three are doubtful attributions: one, the 'Hercules and Cacus,' was not put in hand; and one, the so-called 'Adonis' was probably blocked out by him for a figure of the Julian Tomb. The total, on the most generous computation, is small in a life's work of such productiveness. The charge of paganism sincerely made against him is, beyond doubt, the outcome of the dislike to his constant use of the nude in religious pictures and in religious places. On that issue, enough has already been said, when the question has arisen in each individual case, in the course of these pages.

It has been the scheme of this book throughout to try to make Michelangelo's art explain its own tendencies as the works that came from his hand have passed before us, from the 'Battle of the Centaurs' to the 'Pietà' of Saint Mary of the Flower, so that the need of any extended summing up at the last may be avoided. The book has already exceeded its allotted bounds, and the reader will, I trust, hold me excused from entering into the interesting question of his influence upon the art which was to come after him. The question



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might be well worth discussing, but it cannot be properly dealt with here. He sought no proselytes; he issued no propaganda; he left no school; he may almost be said to have trained no pupils.<sup>1</sup> Those who tried to follow his footsteps, or who believed that they had mastered the secrets of his greatness, lacking any share of his power of mind and power of hand, made at best but parodies both of his thought and of his style. The world is apt to measure the influences of his art through them. If what has been written in this book should lead the reader to a different standard of judgment it will have done all that the author had a right to hope.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix No. iv.

## APPENDIX I. (A)

### WORKS OF MICHELANGELO IN GALLERIES, COLLECTIONS AND CHURCHES OF EUROPE

#### AUSTRIA

VIENNA, ROYAL GALLERY. Madonna with Infant Christ and St. John. Tempera, circular panel. 26 inches in diam.

Probably a work by a Ferrarese master. (See Chapter iv.)

ALBERTINA GALLERY. Drawings by Michelangelo.

#### BELGIUM

BRUGES, NOTRE DAME. Madonna and Child. Marble. 1503-5.

#### BRITISH ISLES

LONDON, NATIONAL GALLERY.

No. 809. Madonna, Infant Christ and St. John, with four angels. Unfinished. Tempera, panel.  $40\frac{1}{2} \times 30$  inches.

See Chapter iv.

No. 790. The Entombment. Unfinished. Tempera, panel.  $63\frac{1}{2} \times 59$  inches.

See Chapter iv.

Leda. (Offices of the National Gallery.) Oil on canvas. Believed to have been suggested by a gem now in the Estense Collection, Modena. Once in the Estense Collections at Ferrara.

See Chapter xv.

VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, SOUTH KENSINGTON.

(a) Marble statue of Cupid (or Apollo) drawing the bow. No. 7560. The left arm wanting and restored by Cavaliere Santarelli. The right hand broken.

The statue was found before 1860 by Professor Miliarini and Cavaliere Santarelli in the gardens of the Oricellari, Florence, and passed into the Gigli-Campana Collection. (See Chapter v.)

(b) Case of small models chiefly in wax, a portion of the Gherardini Collection purchased in 1854; of which sixteen bear the name of Michelangelo. The most important is a sketch in wax (4108) believed to be for a group of Cacus and Hercules; a model in wax (4116) of the David or Apollo

# MICHELANGELO

of the Bargello and a small terra-cotta mask (4107). There is also a colossal hand in terra-cotta (4104) believed to be from a design by Michelangelo. A similar hand was once in the Uffizi Collection (recorded by Gabburri), but disappeared thence.

(c) A terra-cotta model (No. 4119), perhaps by Tribolo, of La Notte; about 16 inches long.

(d) Terra-cotta model (No. 4122), perhaps by Tribolo, of a River God; about 18 inches long.

BRITISH MUSEUM. Department of Mediaeval Antiquities. Wax model. Possibly a sketch for the 'Crepuscolo.'

Print Room. Drawings by Michelangelo.

ROYAL ACADEMY, BURLINGTON HOUSE.

Holy Family. Tondo. Marble.

WINDSOR CASTLE, LIBRARY. Drawings.

OXFORD, TAYLORIAN INSTITUTE. Drawings.

## SCOTLAND

EDINBURGH, NATIONAL GALLERY. Case V. Three small wax models of the Lorenzo, Giuliano, and Virgin of the Sacristy.

These models represent the three statues in practically their final form as they appear in the sacristy. In the Bargello Collection are wax models of 'Notte' and 'Aurora,' which may have belonged to the series. The three models at Edinburgh were found at Siena in 1844 and taken to Florence, where they were bought by Sir Hugh Hume Campbell. There is no record of the models at any previous date.

## FRANCE

PARIS, LOUVRE. Renaissance Sculpture Gallery. Two statues of 'The Slaves' or 'Prisoners.' Unfinished. Originally designed for the Tomb of Julius II. Given by Michelangelo to Roberto Strozzi, 1544; conveyed to France 1550.

Gallery of Drawings. Drawings by Michelangelo.

## GERMANY

BERLIN, KAISER FRIEDRICH MUSEUM.

St. John. Marble. Also ascribed by some authorities to Girolamo da Santacroce or Jacopo Sansovino.

See Chapter v. Bode, Wilson, Lippmann, Springer, Hencke, and others accept it as a work of Michelangelo. Wölfflin, Milanesi, Grimm, and C. Hasse reject it.

Marble unfinished statue of Apollo; ascribed to Michelangelo. Once in the Borghese Collection.

See W. Bode, *Jahrbuch der Kgl. Preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, 1901, Band II., § 61.

Print Cabinet. Drawings by Michelangelo.

MUNICH. Print Cabinet. Drawings by Michelangelo.



# APPENDIX

## ITALY

**BOLOGNA, SAN DOMENICO.** Marble statuette of San Petronio and kneeling angel for the Arca di San Domenico. The statuette of San Procolo, broken by the fall of a ladder, was 'rifatto' by Prospero Clementi (Spain), and shows no longer the handiwork of the master.

**FLORENCE, UFFIZI.** Madonna and Child with St. Joseph and St. John. Oil. Circular panel.

This picture is occasionally described as tempera. It is unquestionably an oil painting.

Drawings by Michelangelo.

### ACCADEMIA DELLE BELLE ARTI.

- (1) David. Colossal marble statue, formerly placed on the Ringhiera in front of the Palazzo Vecchio, 1500.
- (2) Unfinished marble statue of St. Matthew.

### MUSEO NAZIONALE (BARGELLO).

- (1) Adonis: so called. Marble recumbent statue: possibly a figure intended for the Tomb of Julius II. Finished by another hand.  
Heath Wilson states that it is of marble from the quarries of Serravezza, which were not opened till 1517.
- (2) Victory. Marble statue, unfinished.
- (3) David. Till lately known as Apollo. Marble statue, unfinished. Once in the Boboli Gardens, afterwards in the Uffizi. This is evidently the statue of Apollo mentioned by Vasari as begun for Baccio Valori.
- (4) Madonna with Infant Christ and St. John. Marble tondo, unfinished, made for Bartolommeo Pitti.
- (5) Bacchus. Marble statue. An early work of his first Roman period, made for Jacopo Galli.
- (6) Brutus. Ideal marble bust, unfinished. Tiberio Calcagni worked on the drapery.
- (7) Several small terra-cotta and bronze models of River Gods which possibly may be referred to originals by Michelangelo for the Medici Tombs.

### CASA BUONARROTI.

- (1) Battle of the Centaurs, or the 'Rape of Deianeira.' Marble relief. Early work of his first Florentine period. Suggested by Angelo Poliziano.
- (2) Madonna and Child ('Madonna della Scala'). Marble relief. Early work of his first Florentine period in style of Donatello.
- (3) Wax model for the Hercules and Cacus.
- (4) Wax model for the David. Anatomical and other wax models.
- (5) Clay model for the David.

Drawings, letters, and memoranda by Michelangelo.

**NEW SACRISTY OF SAN LORENZO.** Marble statues for the Tombs of the Medici.

Left side. Crepuscolo (Twilight), unfinished. Aurora (Dawn), with seated statue of Lorenzo di Piero dei Medici, Duke of Urbino.

# MICHELANGELO

Right side. *Notte* (Night). *Giorno* (Day), unfinished; with seated statue of Giuliano di Lorenzo dei Medici, Duke of Nemours.

The Virgin and Child, unfinished. Above the slab tomb of Lorenzo the Magnificent and his brother Giuliano.

SANTA MARIA DEL FIORE (DUOMO). Over the High Altar. Marble *Pietà* with St. Joseph, St. Mary, and the Magdalene. Work of his latest Roman period. This work, broken by Michelangelo, was given by him to his servant Antonio. Mended by Calcagni (*q.v.*), was bought by Francesco Bandini for his garden of Monte Cavallo, and in 1722 placed in its present position by Duke Cosimo.

BOBOLI GARDENS. Four unfinished marble statues buried in the clay walls of a grotto. Probably intended for the façade of San Lorenzo, or for the tomb of Julius II.

PALESTRINA (near Rome).

Palazzo Barberini. Chapel of Sta. Rosalia. Marble *Pietà*, unfinished.

ROME, SANTA MARIA SOPRA MINERVA. Marble Statue of the Risen Christ. Worked on by other hands.

SAN PIETRO IN VINCOLI. Tomb of Pope Julius II. Statues of Moses, Rachel, and Leah (Active and Contemplative Life). These two worked on by assistants. Other portions of the tomb by Raffaello da Montelupo (prophet and sibyl): Maso del Bosco (Pope Julius figure): Giacomo del Duca (terminal figures): the Arms of the della Rovere, by Battista Benti: the Madonna, made by Alessandro Scherano da Settignano, from a model by Michelangelo (Vasari).

A wax model of the Moses exists in the Potocki Museum at Warsaw, purchased in France, and a terra-cotta model at Ferrara Museum. A third is mentioned by Vasari.

SAN PIETRO IN VATICANO (ST. PETER'S). *Pietà* in the Chapel of the *Pietà* (to right). Early work of his first Roman period.

Model of the Cupola, carried out under Michelangelo's instructions by Giovanni Franzese. 1558.

PALACE OF THE VATICAN. SISTINE CHAPEL. Frescoes of the Vault. 1508-12.

Fresco of the Last Judgment. 1535-41.

PAOLINE CHAPEL. Two frescoes. Much injured and almost wholly repainted. The Crucifixion of St. Peter: the Conversion of St. Paul. 1542-49 or early in 1550.

PALAZZO RONDANINI. Corso (courtyard). Marble figure, unfinished; possibly begun for a *Pietà*; an arm completely finished on the left-hand portion of the block.

SIENA (DUOMO). Marble statues of Saints in niches on the front of the Piccolomini Altar. Madonna and Child, St. Pius, St. James, St. Gregory, St. Francis, the latter begun by Torrigiani and finished by Michelangelo.

The remaining four do not seem to be from the hand of the master himself, notwithstanding the stipulations of the contract. (See Chapter vi.)

TURIN. Sleeping Cupid. Marble. Ascribed to Michelangelo.

(See Chapter v.)

VENICE. Accademia delle Belle Arti. Drawings by Michelangelo.

# APPENDIX

## RUSSIA

ST. PETERSBURG. Hermitage. Marble statue of a Crouching Man.

RATHSHOF, near DORPAT, LIVONIA. Apollo and Marsyas. Marble relief. Founded on a well-known cameo in Florence. Believed to be an early work before the Battle of the Centaurs.

See Chapter ii.

## APPENDIX I. (B)

### ARCHITECTURE AND ENGINEERING

Designs for façade of San Lorenzo, Florence. (Never executed.) 1516-21.

The Model preserved in the Accademia delle Belle Arti, Florence, is probably not by his hand.

New Sacristy of San Lorenzo, Florence: to contain Tombs of the Medici.

Laurentian Library attached to San Lorenzo, Florence: staircase completed by Bartolommeo Ammanati and Giorgio Vasari.

Design for a garden house and garden for the Duke of Mantua at Marmirolo. (Not carried out.)

Fortifications of San Miniato, Florence (1529). (Now removed.)

Fortifications of the River Arno at Pisa (1529). (Removed.)

Portions of the fortifications of the Borgo Leonino, Rome. (Not distinguishable if still existing.) 1546-7.

Upper story and cornice of Palazzo Farnese, Rome. Two lower stories by Antonio da Sangallo: loggia of river front by Giacomo della Porta.

Design for St. Peter's on plan of Greek Cross, with cupola and portico. Cupola carried out and portions of west end of the church. Ground plan subsequently altered in 1606 to a Latin Cross. (Model of cupola preserved in St. Peter's.)

Design and model of the façade of a palace which Paul III. intended to build near San Rocco. The model was made by one Bastiano Malenotti, a foreman at St. Peter's, who received ten ducats for it in 1551.

Works on both sides the Tiber for the rebuilding of Ponte Santa Maria. The bridge was, however, built by Nanni di Baccio Bigio, and was wrecked by floods. Known as Ponte Rotto.

Plan for the buildings on the Capitol Hill, Rome.

(a) Palace of the Senators. Staircase completed on Michelangelo's design. Upper portion of building altered and carried out by Giacomo della Porta.

(b) Palace of the Conservators, carried out by Tommaso Cavalieri. Mainly on Michelangelo's design.

(c) Capitol Museum, erected in seventeenth century to correspond with the Palace of the Conservators.

Plan prepared for the Church of San Giovanni dei Fiorentini, Rome. (Never executed.)



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Plan for the Porta Pia, exclusive of battlements and upper loggia (1560). Plan for Porta del Popolo (?).

Plan for the Church of Sta. Maria degli Angeli, in the Baths of Diocletian, Rome. Ground plan by Michelangelo with subsequent additions and alterations; and portions of the building up to the cornice, probably after his designs, with superficial additions and changes. Great Cloisters (now Museo delle Terme), from his design: carried out after his death.

## APPENDIX I. (c)

### NOTE ON THE DRAWINGS BY MICHELANGELO

It is not possible to give a detailed list of the drawings which bear the name of the master in many public galleries and in private collections. A certain proportion of these are by pupils such as Bastiano da Sangallo, dal Vero, etc., from his sketches or after his designs or from his finished works.

The British Museum Print Room; Windsor Castle Library and Oxford University (Taylorian) Collections in England; the Berlin and Munich Print Rooms in Germany; the Albertina Gallery in Vienna; the Louvre in Paris; the Casa Buonarroti in Florence; the Uffizi in Florence; the Teyler Museum in Haarlem,<sup>1</sup> have the most numerous collections. The Royal Gallery, Stockholm; the Accademia, Venice; the Staedel Institute, Frankfurt; the Wicar Museum at Lille; the Print Room, Amsterdam; the Château Chantilly Collection, and many others possess a smaller number, or isolated examples which bear the master's name.

Dr. Ernst Steinmann in his great work on the Sistine Chapel publishes reproductions of nearly eighty drawings, great and small, in various galleries which have reference more or less direct to the frescoes of the Vault of the Sistine or to the Last Judgment. A proportion of these are not from the master's own hand.

The drawing of the Tomb of Julius II. in the Uffizi is declared by Signor Neroni Ferri and Herr Jacobsen to be the work of Aristotele da Sangallo.

<sup>1</sup> The Teyler Museum Collection, of great value as illustrating the work of the artist in all his periods, is a collection made one hundred years back, and was unknown to most connoisseurs till the year (1898) of the Art Congress at Amsterdam. They are published in facsimile by Brückmann of Munich, 1901, edited by F. von Marquard.

## APPENDIX I. (d)

### DESIGNS FOR GOLDSMITHS' WORK

1. Model prepared for a silver saltcellar for the Duke of Urbino (lost).

This work is mentioned in a letter of June 4, 1537, from Girolamo Staccoli to the Duke of Urbino.

2. Vasari states that Michelangelo designed the Ciborio del Sacramento in Sta. Maria degli Angeli, cast in bronze by Jacopo del Duca Siciliano; Giovanni Bernardi

## APPENDIX

da Castel Bolognese helping to execute the intagli with precious stones. This Ciborio is now in the Museum at Naples, under the name of the Ciborio Farnesino, because it was done at the expense of Alessandro Farnese, nephew of Paul III., but the lapis lazuli and precious stones have been abstracted.

3. Dagger hilt or sword hilt made in 1507, at Bologna, for Pietro Aldovrandini. The latter objecting to the length of the blade, it was given by Michelangelo to Filippo Strozzi.

### APPENDIX I. (E)

#### RECORDED WORKS BY MICHELANGELO, LOST OR UNIDENTIFIED

Free coloured copy (about 1488) founded on the Temptation of St. Anthony by Martin Schongauer. Earliest recorded work of the master.

Marble copy from an antique Mask of a Faun. 1489-90.

The head in the Bargello has been identified with this work, but is of later date, and by another hand.

Hercules in marble, 7 feet 8 inches high (1492). Ultimately went to France. Mentioned by Vasari as a work done in the Medici Gardens.

Sleeping Cupid. 1495. Sold to Cardinal S. Giorgio; went to Palace of Urbino; thence to Isabella d'Este at Mantua. Went to England. Sometimes identified with a work in Turin Gallery.

Bronze statue of David. Fourth century. Went to France to Château of Blois. Cast in 1508.

Cartoon for the Battle of Cascina in the War of Pisa, destined for the Municipal Palace, Florence. 1504-5. Destroyed.

Clay models for recumbent figures. River Gods for the lower portions of the Medici Tombs, prepared by Michelangelo, were placed in the Sacristy, to be carried out by Tribolo. They disappeared. Small clay and bronze models, apparently founded on these originals, are in various public galleries in Europe, *e.g.* Bargello, Victoria and Albert Museums.

Marble statue of Apollo for Baccio (Bartolommeo) Valori, unfinished.

The unfinished statue in the Bargello has been considered to be this work, but latterly the name of David has been given to it.

A model of a head in wax and a drawing of S. Catherine sent as a present to Pietro Aretino (letter of September 7, 1535).

A picture (or drawing?) of the Crucifixion, with angels painted (or drawn) for Vittoria Colonna, and mentioned by her in a letter to Michelangelo (1535).

A copy founded on this by A. Allori at Florence.

A second 'disegno' also mentioned of a Virgin with the Child in her arms for Vittoria Colonna; besides a Christ at the Well (Vasari).

Model in wax for a horse. Mentioned in a letter, October 27, 1537, from the Duke of Urbino to his agent in Rome, Giovanni Maria della Porta.

# MICHELANGELO

A case of models sent into France in the charge of Antonio Mini, together with the picture of Leda.

Terra-cotta sketch model for the staircase of Laurentian Library, sent from Rome to Bartolommeo Ammanati at Florence (letter of January 1559).

A small bronze model of a River God is mentioned in the inventory of the Medici Collection, 1553, as a work by Michelangelo. Adolf Gottschewski thinks that he recognises this in the small bronze in the first bronze room of the Bargello (*Rivista dell' Arte*, vol. iv. 73-8). He connects this with the Torso in the Accademia.

A sketch of a dead Christ in marble and a statuette of Christ carrying the Cross were given by the master to his last servant, Antonio Francese di Giammaria di Castel Durante.

Various 'disegni' and 'cartoni' are mentioned by Vasari as given by Michelangelo to Tommaso de' Cavalieri; Fra Bastiano; Messer Bindo; Gherardo Perini; Marchese del Vasto; Bartolommeo Bettini, etc. A Venus and Cupid was put into colour by Pontormo, and is possibly the edition belonging to the Uffizi. Several other copies or variations are in existence.

## APPENDIX I. (F)

### LITERARY REMAINS

Sonnets.	{	Published under the name of <i>Le Rime di Michelangelo</i> .
Madrigals.		Cesare Guasti. Firenze: Le Monnier. 1863.
Epigrammatic verse.		Sämmtliche Gedichte Michelangelo's. Sophie Hasenclever: Leipzig. 1875.

Letters: 495 in number, of which 341 are to his relations and 154 to other persons. (Ed. Gaetano Milanesi. Florence 1875.)

## APPENDIX II. (A)

### CHRONOLOGY OF MICHELANGELO'S LIFE

- 1475. March 6. Born at Caprese in the Casentino.
- 1488. April 1. Apprenticed to Domenico Ghirlandaio.
- 1490. Transferred to the school of Bertoldo in the Medici Gardens. Becomes an inmate of the Palazzo Medici (now Riccardi).
- 1492. Death of Lorenzo the Magnificent.
- 1494. October. Michelangelo leaves Florence for Bologna. Visits Venice. Returns to Bologna. Three statues of the Arca di San Domenico.
- 1495. Returns to Florence. Makes the statue of Cupid sold to Cardinal San Giorgio (Riario).
- 1496. First visit to Rome.



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1497. November. First visit to Carrara to obtain marble for the Pietà of St. Peter's.
1498. August 27. Commission signed for the Pietà of St. Peter's.
1501. June 5. Commission signed for fifteen statues for the Piccolomini altar-piece in the Duomo, Siena.  
August 16. Commission signed for the colossal David from the Operai di Santa Maria del Fiore, Florence.
1502. August 12. Commission signed for a David in bronze ( $2\frac{1}{2}$  braccia) from the Operai di Santa Maria del Fiore. Completed in 1508.
1503. April 24. Commission from the Consoli dell' Arte della Lana and the Operai di Santa Maria del Fiore for twelve apostles in marble ( $4\frac{1}{4}$  braccia each). St. Matthew alone commenced.
1504. September 8. Statue of David finally placed on its pedestal on the Ringhiera (stone platform) in front of the Palazzo Vecchio.
1504. October. Cartoon of the War of Pisa commenced (finished in August 1509).
- 1505 (?). Madonna of Notre Dame of Bruges.
1505. November 12. Second visit to Carrara (to obtain marbles for the Tomb of Julius).  
1506. April 17. Suddenly leaves Rome the day before the foundation of the new St. Peter's was laid.  
Goes to Bologna at the summons of Julius II.
1507. Engaged on the bronze statue of Julius II. for San Petronio (set up on February 21, 1508; destroyed December 30, 1511). Returns to Florence.
1508. Spring. Second visit to Rome. On May 10 the Vault of the Sistine is taken in hand.  
In this year, on March 13, Michelangelo, being now thirty-three years old, was formally emancipated by his father.
1512. The Vault of the Sistine completed; opened to view in the last days of 1512, or first days of 1513.
1513. Death of Julius II. Second contract for the tomb signed on May 6.
1514. June 15. Contract for the Christ of the Minerva (completed in 1521).
1516. July 4 and 8. Third contract for the Tomb of Julius.
1516. November 1-18. At Carrara; returns to Rome; prepares model for façade of San Lorenzo (executed by Baccio d'Agnolo).
1516. December. Returns to Carrara.
1517. Backwards and forwards between Carrara and Florence. Puts in hand a new model for the façade (August).
1518. January 19. Contract signed for the façade of San Lorenzo. Visits Pietra Santa, Carrara, Avenza, to excavate marbles.  
July 14. Purchases the site of his studio in Via Mozza (now San Zanobi).
1519. September. Returns from Carrara to Florence.  
October 20. Offers Pope Leo X. to make a monument to Dante.
1520. March 12. The contract for the façade of San Lorenzo annulled by Pope Leo X.  
End of March. Michelangelo undertakes the Sacristy of San Lorenzo and Tomb of the Medici.

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1521. Various journeys to Carrara to obtain marbles for the Medici Tombs.
1523. Makes a model for a house and garden for the Marquis of Mantua at Marmirolo (not executed).
1524. Undertakes the Laurentian Library.
1525. Makes a design for the tomb of Bartolommeo Barbazza in San Petronio, Bologna.
1528. July 2. His brother Buonarroto dies of plague at Florence.  
August 2. The Signoria of Florence commission a group (Samson and the Philistine). Never completed. The marble ultimately used for Bandinelli's Hercules and Cacus.
1529. Siege of Florence. January. Michelangelo elected one of the Nine.  
April 3. Appointed to the charge of the fortifications of San Miniato, and afterwards of all the defences of the town and of Tuscany. Visits Pisa, Livorno, Ferrara.  
September 21. His flight from Florence: goes to Venice: outlawed: returns to Florence: paints the Leda.
1530. August 12. Fall of Florence. Pardoned by Pope Clement. Continues the work on the Tombs of the Medici.
1532. April 29. Fourth contract for Tomb of Julius II.
1534. September 25. Death of Clement VII.  
December. Michelangelo finally leaves Florence for Rome.
1535. September 1. Brief of Pope Paul III. appointing Michelangelo sculptor, painter, and architect of the Vatican.
1537. Makes a silver salt-cellar for the Duke of Urbino (lost).
1541. December 25. The Last Judgment opened to view.
1542. August 20. Last contract for the Tomb of Julius II.
1544. January. Design for a marble tomb for Cecchino Bracci.  
June. Ill in the house of Roberto Strozzi.
1545. February. Dispute with Sangallo concerning the fortifications of the Borgo Leonino of Rome.
1546. March 20. Made a citizen of Rome. Invited by Duke Cosimo to return to Florence.
1547. January 1. Made sole architect of St. Peter's.
1549. Probable completion of the frescoes of Cappella Paolina.  
November 10. Death of Paul III.
1552. January 23. Confirmed as architect of St. Peter's by Julius III.
1554. December 4. Death of his servant Urbino (Francesco d'Amadore).
1555. June and September. Again urged to return to Florence by Duke Cosimo to complete the Sacristy of San Lorenzo and Laurentian Library.
1556. September and October. Takes a journey to Spoleto and Loreto.
1557. May. Once more urged to return to Florence by Duke Cosimo.
1558. September 28. Sends to Giorgio Vasari instructions for the stairs of the Laurentian Library.
1558. Model prepared for the cupola of St. Peter's (by Giovanni Franzese).
1559. January. Clay model for the stairs of Laurentian Library sent to Bartolommeo Ammanati. Plans prepared for Church of San Giovanni dei Fiorentini, Rome.

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1560. Commission given by Pius iv. for Porta Pia. Design furnished to Leone Leoni for the tomb of the Marchese di Marignano in the Duomo di Milano.  
1564. February 18. Death of Michelangelo in Rome.  
July 14. Funeral of Michelangelo in San Lorenzo, Florence.

## APPENDIX II. (B)

### POPES DURING THE LIFE OF MICHELANGELO

(1475-1564)

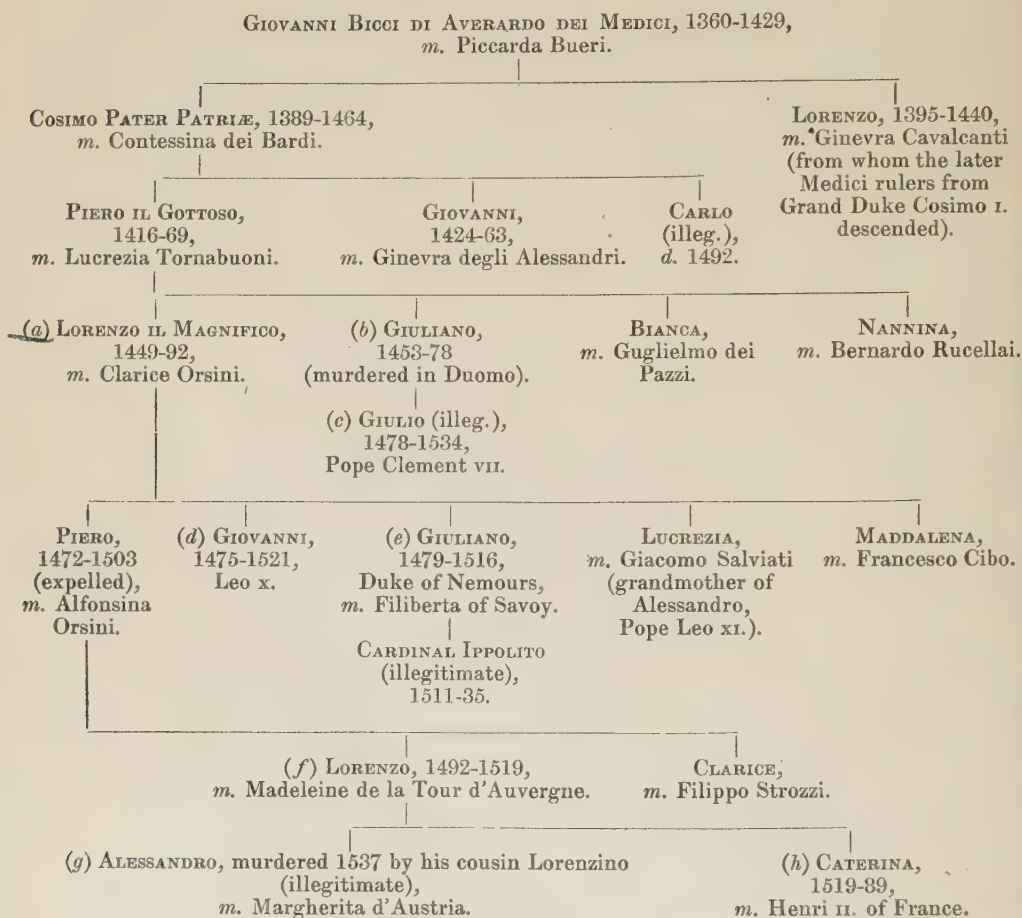
1471. Sixtus iv. (Francesco della Rovere).  
1484. Innocent viii. (Gian Battista Cibo).  
1492. Alexander vi. (Roderigo Lenzoli, or Lançol, who took the name of Borgia from his uncle Callixtus iii.).  
1503. Pius iii. (Antonio Todeschini Piccolomini).  
Commissioned (as Cardinal) fifteen statues for the Altar-piece in the Duomo, Siena.  
1503. Julius ii. (Giuliano della Rovere).  
Commissioned (a) Tomb in S. Pietro in Vincoli, Rome.  
(b) The Bronze Statue at Bologna (destroyed).  
(c) The Frescoes of the Sistine Vault.  
(d) The Rebuilding of St. Peter's (to Bramante).  
1513. Leo x. (Giovanni dei Medici).  
Commissioned the Façade of San Lorenzo, Florence.  
1522. Adrian vi. (Adriaen Florent of Utrecht).  
1523. Clement vii. (Giulio dei Medici).  
Commissioned (a) The New Sacristy of San Lorenzo with the Medici Tombs, Florence.  
(b) The Laurentian Library, Florence.  
(c) The Last Judgment, Sistine Chapel, Rome.  
1534. Paul iii. (Alessandro Farnese).  
Commissioned (a) (as Cardinal) The Farnese Palace, Rome.  
(b) The Last Judgment (continued from Clement vii.).  
(c) Frescoes of Pauline Chapel in the Vatican.  
(d) Appointed Michelangelo Architect of St. Peter's.  
1550. Julius iii. (Giovanni Maria Ciocchi del Monte).  
Confirmed Michelangelo as Architect of St. Peter's.  
1555. Marcellus ii. (Marcello Cervini).  
1555. Paul iv. (Giovanni Pietro Caraffa).  
1559. Pius iv. (Angelo dei Medici of Milan).



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## APPENDIX II. (c)

### MEDICI DESCENT WITH REFERENCE TO MICHELANGELO'S WORK



- (a) Lorenzo the Magnificent and (b) his murdered brother Giuliano lie in the slab tomb of the New Sacristy of San Lorenzo, beneath the Madonna and Child.
- (c) Giulio, afterwards Clement VII., for whom the Sacristy with the Medici Tombs and the Laurentian Library were executed. Also projected the fresco of the Last Judgment.
- (d) Giovanni, Leo X., for whom the façade of San Lorenzo was designed.
- (e) Giuliano, Duke of Nemours, buried beneath his statue above the Notte and Giorno in the Sacristy of San Lorenzo.
- (f) Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino, buried beneath his statue above the Aurora and Crepuscolo.
- (g) Duke Alessandro, 'The Mule,' buried, after his murder, in the sarcophagus of (f) Lorenzo his father.
- (h) Caterina dei Medici, who commissioned the equestrian statue of Henri II. (not executed).

# APPENDIX

## APPENDIX III.

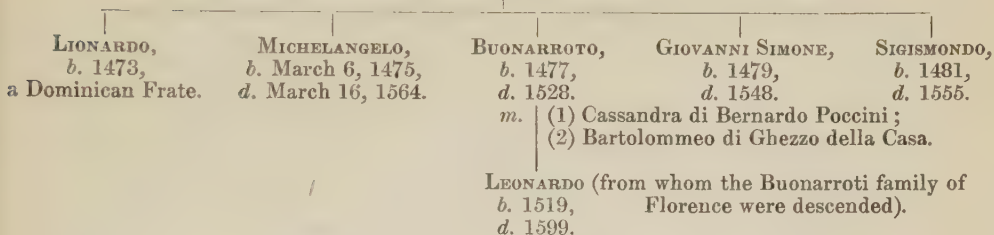
### IMMEDIATE FAMILY OF MICHELANGELO

LODOVICO DI BUONARROTI SIMONE OF SETTIGNANO,

*b.* 1444, *d.* 1534,

*m.* (1) Francesca di Neri di Miniato del Sera (mother of Michelangelo);

(2) Lucrezia di Antonio Ubaldini da Gagliano.



## APPENDIX IV.

### SCHOLARS, ASSISTANTS, OR ARTISTS WHO WORKED IN COLLABORATION WITH MICHELANGELO

FRANCESCO GRANACCI (1477-1543), fellow-pupil with the master in Ghirlandaio's workshop, and under Bertoldo. Acted as agent in engaging assistants for the Sistine Vault; was himself employed for a few weeks upon the work.

JACOPO L'INDACO (1476-1544), pupil of Domenico Ghirlandaio, worked for a short time on the Sistine Vault.

GIULIANO BUGIARDINI (1475-1554), worked on the Sistine Vault, carried out cartoons or drawings designed by the master, assisted in the Sacristy of San Lorenzo. Is believed by some authorities to be the executant of the tempera panel (809) in the National Gallery, 'The Madonna and Child with St. John and Angels.'

PIETRO URBANO DA PISTOLA worked at Bologna on the bronze statue of Julius II. Much employed by the master at the quarries of Carrara and Pietra Santa.

LAPO DI ANTONIO DI LAPO (1465-1526), sculptor of Florence, employed for a few weeks on the bronze statue of Julius II.

LUDOVICO DI GUGLIELMO DEL BUONO (Lotti) (born 1458), apprentice of Pollaiuolo, worked for a few weeks on the statue of Julius II., afterwards became master-founder of ordnance to the Republic of Florence.

BASTIANO DA SANGALLO, called Aristotele, nephew of Giuliano Sangallo, worked for a few weeks in 1508 on the Sistine vault. Made many copies of Michelangelo's drawings, some of which have been attributed to the master. The project for the 'Tomb of Julius' in the Uffizi and that for the 'Medici Tomb' in the Albertina and the San Lorenzo Façade are now believed to be from his hand, also the copy of the cartoon of Pisa at Holkham.

PIETRO D'URBINO. He finished, and injured, the statue of the 'Risen Christ' of the Minerva (1521). Went to Naples shortly afterwards, and is not again heard of.

## MICHELANGELO

- JACOPO DI SANDRO } employed for a few weeks in 1508 on the Sistine vault.  
AGNOLO DI DONNINO }
- MAESTRO BERNARDINO DI ANTONIO. Founder of cannon to the Signoria of Florence.  
Cast the statue of Julius II. at Bologna.
- BACCIO D'AGNOLO, architect, made a wooden model of the master's design for the Façade of San Lorenzo. Served Michelangelo at the quarries of Pietra Santa in 1518.
- ANTONIO MINI DA FIRENZE (died 1533). Assisted the sculptor in the Sacristy of San Lorenzo. Went to France with the 'Leda' and other works, and died there.
- RAFFAELLO DA MONTELUPO, son of Baccio da Montelupo (1505-67). Made the statue of St. Damian in the Sacristy of San Lorenzo, the figure to the right on the slab tomb of Lorenzo the Magnificent. Made, by special contract of August 20, 1542, the statues of a prophet and a sibyl for the 'Tomb of Julius II.,' and was responsible for the Madonna (see p. 74).
- FRA GIOVANNI ANGELO DA MONTORSOLI (1507?-1563). Made the statue of St. Cosmo in the New Sacristy of San Lorenzo, the figure to the left on the slab tomb of Lorenzo the Magnificent. Also is said to have helped with the seated figures of Giuliano and of Lorenzo.
- MASO DEL BOSCO (Tommaso di Pietro Boscoli da Fiesole) (1501-1574), made the recumbent figure of Julius II. on the tomb.
- ALESSANDRO SCHERANO DA SETTIGNANO. Stated by Vasari to have made the Madonna of the 'Julius Tomb' from a model by Michelangelo. He was probably a workman of Montelupo (see note on page 74).
- GIACOMO DEL DUCA, assistant to Montelupo, carved the terminal figures on the 'Tomb of Julius.'
- BATTISTA DONATO BENTI. Carved the della Rovere arms on the 'Tomb of Julius II. '; served Michelangelo as paymaster to the men at Pietra Santa (see document of June 1, 1518, where he is described as Scultore Fiorentino).
- FRANCESCO DI BERNARDINO D'AMADORE (called Urbino), studio-helper for twenty-five years to the master. Did part of the masonry of the 'Tomb of Julius,' for which he received 800 scudi, signing the contract of May 16, 1542, by proxy, as he did not know how to write. He died 1454.
- NICOLO PERICOLI (Tribolo) (1486-1550). Carried out the pavement of the Laurentian Library. Was to have carried out the 'Heaven' and 'Earth,' two recumbent figures below the tombs of the Medici, from the models by the master, but was prevented by illness or other cause.
- MAESTRO ANTONIO, DETTO IL CAROTA, woodcarver, and BATTISTA TASSO, intagliatore, carved the ceiling of the Laurentian Library; and also the desks and seats with the help of two other sculptors, namely, BATTISTA BOTTICELLI DEL CINQUE, intagliatore, and CIAPPINO (unknown).
- TIBERIO CALCAGNI, was employed to finish the 'Brutus,' but refused to touch the face, working on the drapery and base only. Also worked on the 'Pietà' of Santa Maria del Fiore, repairing the broken portions.
- PIERO DI JACOPO ROSSELLI prepared the plaster surface of the vault of the Sistine.
- MARCELLO VENUSTI (*circa* 1520-1579?) called Mantovano, though he was of Como. Painted a good many works from Michelangelo's designs, as No. 1227 'The



## APPENDIX

Virgin with Sleeping Child' (Il Silenzio); and No. 1194 'Christ and the Money Changers,' in the National Gallery, London. Painted a copy of the 'Last Judgment' during Michelangelo's lifetime, with a portrait of the master inserted, now at Naples.

GIOVANNI DE' MARCHESI DA SALTRI assisted in the masonry of the 'Tomb of Julius II.' GIOVANNI FRANZESE made the model of the cupola of St. Peter's, 1558, under Michelangelo's direction.

SILVIO COSINI DA FIESOLE (1495-1540) mentioned as one of the master's pupils by Vasari, but was a scholar of Andrea Ferrucci. Employed on the 'Medici Tombs.' Carved the Mask of the 'Notte' and portions of architectural sculpture.

JACOPO TATTI called SANSOVINO, described as 'one of his workmen' (dei suoi artefici) by Vasari, but in evident error: Il Rosso (Gian Battista di Jacopo) is similarly described.

JACOPO CARUCCI DA PONTORMO (1494-1557). Executed several pictures in tempera from the cartoons or drawings of the master. Has been named as the executant of the panel 809, 'Madonna with Christ, St. John and angels,' in National Gallery, London.

SEBASTIANO LUCIANI DEL PIOMBO DA VENEZIA (1485-1547). Executed several pictures in oil from the cartoons or designs of the master, notably the 'Raising of Lazarus' in the National Gallery, and the 'Flagellation' in S. Pietro in Montorio, Rome.

DANIELE RICCIARELLI DA VOLTERRA (1509-1566). Executed the 'Descent from the Cross' in the Trinità dei Monti, Rome, believed to be on the master's design. Modelled a bust portrait of Michelangelo, of which several variations exist in the Capitol, Casa Buonarroti, and Bargello Collections. Also modelled and cast the bronze horse for the statue of Henri II. of France, commissioned by Catherine de Medici to Michelangelo. The horse alone completed by Daniele da Volterra.

GIOVANNI DA UDINE (1487-1566) did the decorations, doubtless from his own designs, for the Sacristy of San Lorenzo (now destroyed or covered with whitewash).

BARTOLOMMEO AMMANATI (1511-1592). Took a share in carrying forward the entrance-hall and staircase in the Laurentian Library.

ASCANIO CONDIVI DA RIPA TRANSONE (born 1525). Author of the *Life* of the Master, drowned in the Merrocchia, 1574.

GIORGIO VASARI (born 1511, died 1574). Author of the *Life* of the Master in his *Lives of the Painters*. Helped to carry out the staircase of the Laurentian Library.

## APPENDIX V.

### PORTRAITS OF MICHELANGELO

ASCANIO CONDIVI'S DESCRIPTION OF THE SCULPTOR AT THE AGE OF SEVENTY-NINE. *La Vita di Michelangelo*. Transcribed in *Rime e Lettere*, G. Babèra, Florence, 1858.

'Michelangelo is of good physique, of a frame rather nervous and bony, than fleshy and fat. Healthy above all both by nature and by bodily exercise and self-

## MICHELANGELO

control in things concerning the appetites; although from childhood he was sickly and precarious, and from manhood he had had two maladies. He suffers, moreover, from a painful internal malady (calculus). He has always had a good colour in his face; and his stature is as follows—He is in height of medium size; broad in the shoulders and in the rest of his body in proportion to these, rather slight than not. The face in that part of the head which shows itself in front is of a round form, so that above the ears<sup>1</sup> half round (to the back) makes one sixth the circumference. Thus the temples come to spread themselves somewhat more than the ears, and the ears more than the cheeks, and these more than the rest. So that the head in proportion to the face can be called nothing if not large. The forehead in this view is square, the nose a little flattened, not by nature, but because when a child, one named Torrigiano de' Torrigiani, a beastly and swaggering fellow, with a blow of his fist almost smashed the cartilage of the nose; yet the said nose, just as it is, is proportioned to the forehead and to the rest of the head. The lips are thin, but the lower lip somewhat thicker, so that to one who views it in profile it extends a little outwards. The chin agrees well with the above-mentioned parts. The forehead in profile projects in front of the nose, and this is little less than broken, if it had not a little lump in the middle. The eyebrows have few hairs; the eyes may be called small rather than otherwise, of the colour of horn, but with varying spots of sparkling yellow and blue; the ears well shaped; the hair black as well as the beard, except at this time of his life, at the age of seventy-nine, his hair is plentifully streaked with white, and the beard is forked, about four or five digits long as may partly be seen in his portrait.

PORTRAITS (see Notes to the Vasari *Life of Michelangelo*, Milanesi. Florence, 1906).—There are many portraits of Michelangelo in existence, but Vasari mentions only four contemporary likenesses. Of these the first is by

- (1) Giuliano Bugiardini, commissioned by Ottaviano dei Medici. This portrait has been recognised by Cav. Zobi as that which at the time of his writing was in the hands of Signor Fedi. Milanesi believes it to be rather a work in possession of a French gentleman, Chaix d'Estang.
- (2) A portrait by Jacopo del Conte, believed by Milanesi to be the portrait now preserved in Palazzo Strozzi, Florence.
- (3) Daniele Ricciarelli da Volterra modelled a bust of Michelangelo, of which he cast three copies or variations, two for Leonardo, Michelangelo's nephew, and one for himself. His workmen cast a fourth after his death for Diomede Leoni. These four may perhaps be identified in the bronze busts in (a) the Museo Nazionale (Bargello), Florence, once the property of Antonio del Franzese di Castel Durante, last servant of Michelangelo; (b) the bust in the Capitol Gallery, Rome; (c) the bust in Casa Buonarroti, Florence (attributed to Giovanni da Bologna); (d) the bust in the Louvre, once in the collection of

<sup>1</sup> I can only thus explain the phrase 'Sopra l'orecchie fa più di mezzo tondo una sesta parte' as meaning that if the head above the ears was measured half round to the back it formed not one fourth but one sixth, giving as the portraits show immense preponderance to the forward portion of the skull.







BUST OF MICHELANGELO

*Capitol, Rome*

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M. Piot. There are four others in existence, apparently variations from the same model.

- (4) The Medal by Leone Leoni (1561). Obverse: The head of Michelangelo, with the words 'Michelangelus: Bonarrotus: Flor: æt: s: ann: 88.' Reverse: an old man, leaning on a staff, and led by a dog. 'Docebo: iniquos: v: t: et: impii: ad: te: conver.' [The reverse was suggested to Leoni by Michelangelo himself]. In the Casa Buonarroti is a portrait attributed to Marco Venusti, perhaps to be referred to one of the originals above mentioned. Another in the same collection of a man with dark beard and wearing a sort of turban is of doubtful authenticity.

In the Museum of Naples, on the copy of the 'Last Judgment' by M. Venusti, is inserted a portrait of Michelangelo; and another in the 'Assumption of the Virgin' by Daniele da Volterra in the Trinità dei Monti Church in Rome. A portrait introduced by Vasari into his frescoes in the Cancelleria, Rome. There is a drawing in the Uffizi collection of Michelangelo seated attributed to Daniele da Volterra. It has not the appearance of a portrait from the life.





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*St. Peter's, Rome*

EZEKIEL



SIBYLLA FURIATILIS

*Sistine, Rome*





*Sd' — Rome*

JOF



ZACHARIAS

g. 1710. Rome



*Sistine, Rome*

SIBYLLA DELPHICA





ESAIAS

*Sistine, Rome*



*Sistine, Rome*

FIGURE 10 LEFT OF JEREMIAS



FIGURE TO THE LEFT OF JESUS

*Sistine, Rom*





*Fastene, Rome*

FIGURE TO LEFT OF *Z* KIEL.



FIGURE TO RIGHT OF HAKKIA.



*Sistine, Rome*

FIGURE TO LEFT OF ERYTHRA





FIGURE TO RIGHT OF TRUTH/CEA



FIGURE TO LEFT OF JOEL

*Sistine, Rome*



FIGURE TO RIGHT OF JOEL

*Sistine, Rome*





*Sistine, Rome*

FIGURE TO LEFT OF DELPHICA



FIGURE TO LEFT OF ESAIAS



FIGURE TO RIGHT OF ESAIAS

*Sistine, Rome*





FIGURE TO RIGHT OF CUMÆA

*Sistine, Rome*



FIGURE TO LEFT OF CUMÆA

*Sistine, Rome*



FIGURE TO LEFT OF DANIEL

*Sistine, Rome*





*Michelangelo*

FIGURE TO RIGHT OF DANIEL



FIGURE TO LEFT OF LIBYCA

*Sistine, Rome*



*Sistine, Rome*

FIGURE TO RIGHT OF LIBYCA





GROUP IN TRIANGLE  
(BRONZE)



GROUP IN TRIANGLE  
(ZERUBBABEL)



STUDY FOR THE ANGEL IN THE LAST JUDGMENT  
(MICHELANGELO OR COPYIST)

*British Museum*





*British Museum*

STUDY FOR A MUSE.



STUDY FOR A SIBYL





STUDY FOR THE SISTINE FRESCOES

*Louvre, Paris*





STUDY FOR THE LUNETTE "JOSEPH" IN THE SISTINE

*Windsor Castle*



STUDY FOR ST. LAWRENCE IN THE LAST JUDGMENT

*Taylor Museum, Haarlem*

Y



THE RISEN CHRIST

*Minozzi, Rome*





*Bar. cto. Florent*

ADONIS



STUDY FOR THE GROUP OF THE SEVEN CHIEF SINS

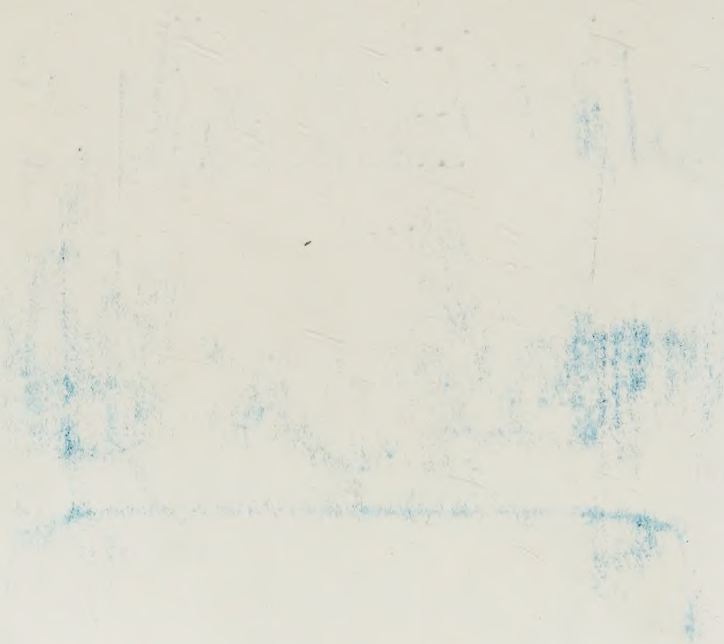
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